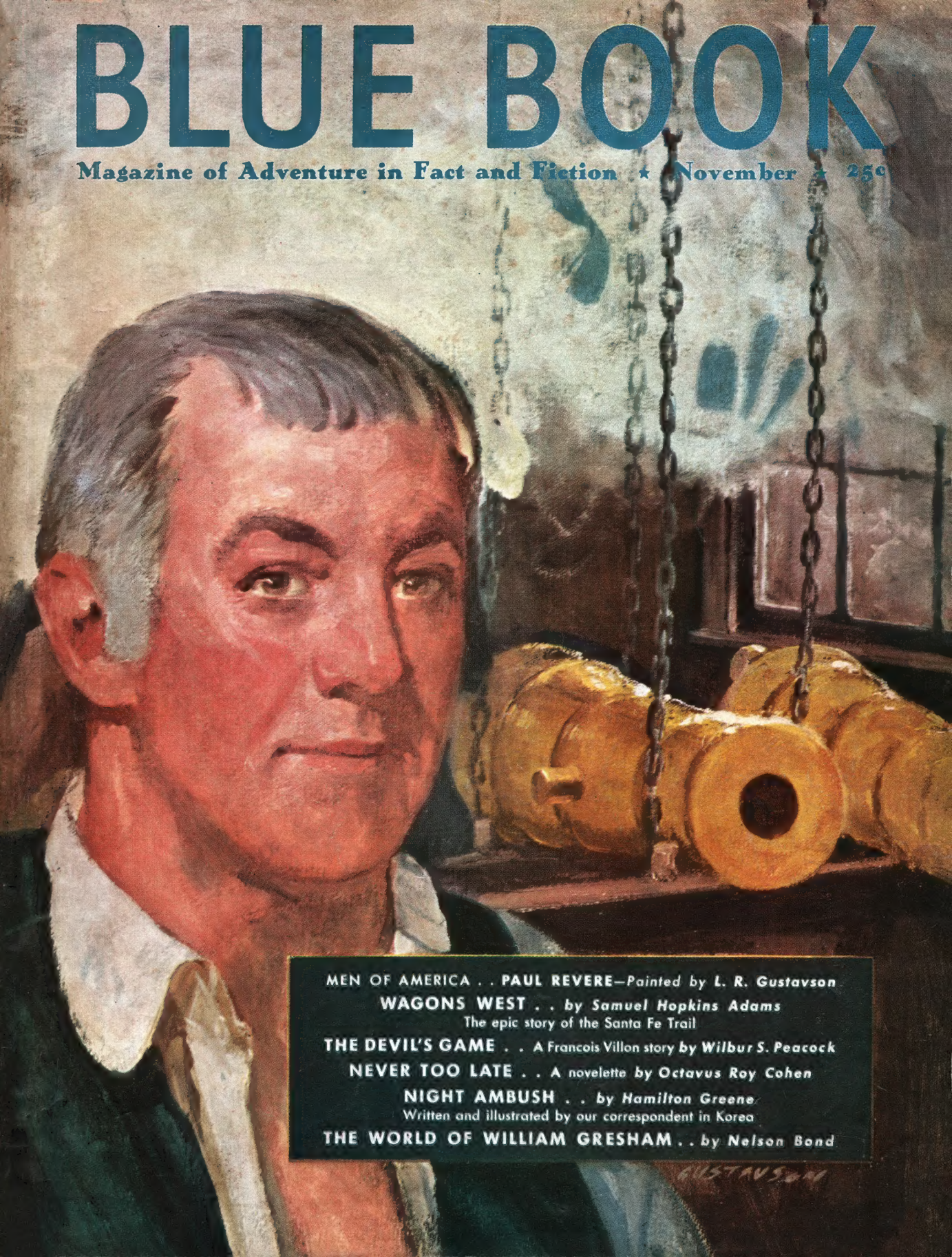
BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure in Fact and Fiction ★ November ★ 25¢



MEN OF AMERICA . . **PAUL REVERE**—*Painted by* **L. R. Gustavson**

WAGONS WEST . . *by* **Samuel Hopkins Adams**
The epic story of the Santa Fe Trail

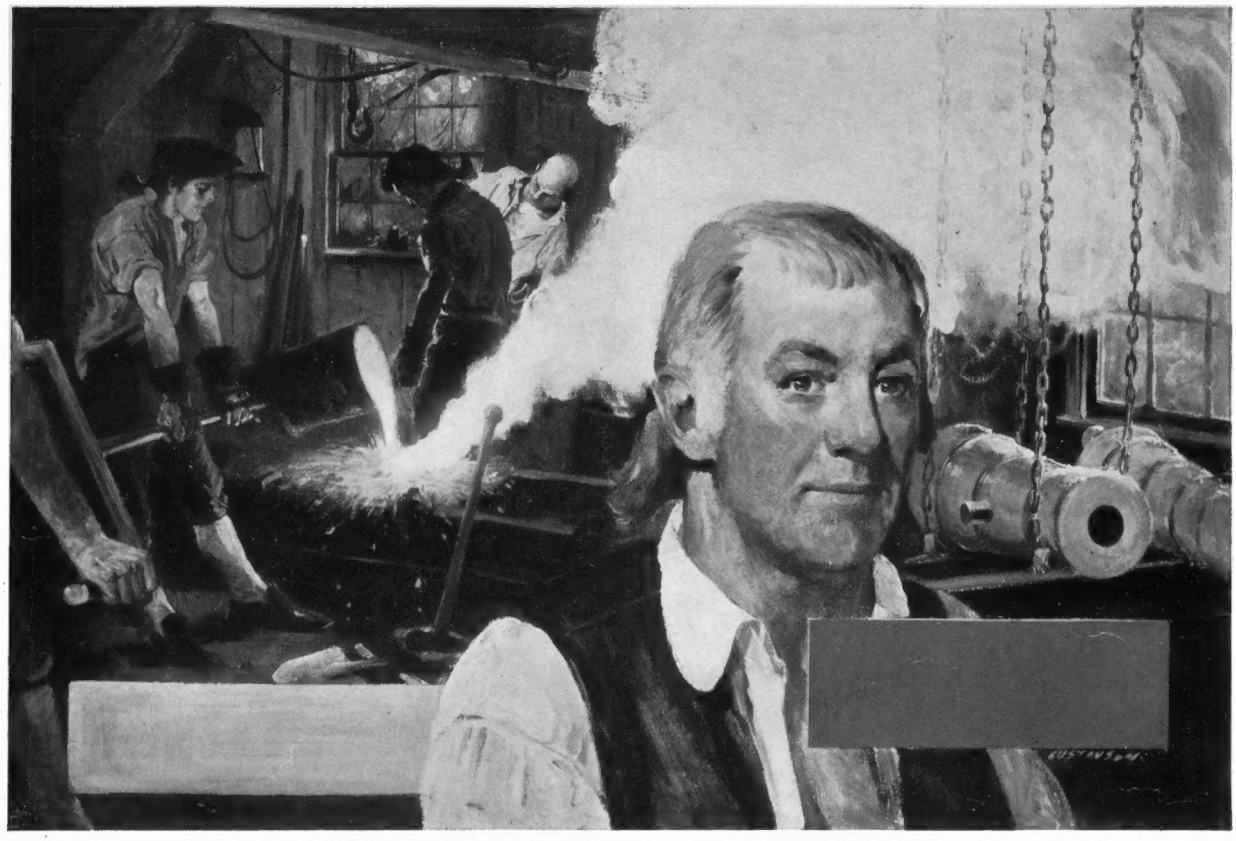
THE DEVIL'S GAME . . A Francois Villon story *by* **Wilbur S. Peacock**

NEVER TOO LATE . . A novelette *by* **Octavus Roy Cohen**

NIGHT AMBUSH . . *by* **Hamilton Greene**
Written and illustrated by our correspondent in Korea

THE WORLD OF WILLIAM GRESHAM . . *by* **Nelson Bond**

GUSTAVSON



MEN OF AMERICA—PAUL REVERE

MAN OF THE PEOPLE

PAUL REVERE, the hard-riding patriot of the American Revolution, was born in the brawling seaport community of Boston on January 1, 1735 (which was December 21, 1734, Old Style), the son of Paul and Deborah Revere. His mother was of New England stock, his father a French Huguenot immigrant named Appollos Rivoire.

On arriving in Boston by way of the Isle of Guernsey, where he had stayed briefly with relatives, Appollos Rivoire changed his name to Paul Revere, "so that the bumpkins could pronounce it easier." The new citizen of Boston settled down to the trade of silversmith, after marrying Deborah Hitchbourn.

Young Paul Revere was apprenticed to his father's trade, after early schooling at the North Writing School in Boston. If he had been the son of a "gentleman," as the term was understood in those days, the son of a merchant or shipbuilder, he would have gone to Latin School, as did the Adamses and the Hancocks; but from the very beginning Paul Revere was a man of the people.

He was the second of eight children whom Deborah Revere was to bear to Paul, Sr. The family was respectable, devoted, and strictly religious in the sectarian sense, so much so that Paul, Jr., was once walloped for attending services conducted by the Rev. Jonathan Mayhew, an eminent divine of the Established Church.

Though it is unlikely that Paul had more than five years of schooling altogether, for he was apprenticed to the silversmith's trade at the age of thirteen, he apparently was a good student and a lover of books. His later letters and "depositions" show a style that is clear, colorful and less infected with bad grammar than that of many a contemporary who would have been esteemed a "gentleman."

The Boston in which Paul grew up was a thriving town of ten thousand people, a seafaring and shipbuilding center which had grown wealthy since the French and Indian wars. But like the rest of the Colonies it was seething with bitterness against the taxation devices by which the British Crown was seeking to drain off that wealth. It was in this explosive atmosphere that young Paul Revere learned his trade of working in gold and silver.

In 1756, however, when he was twenty-one years old, Paul abandoned his workbench long enough to enlist in General Winslow's expedition to Crown Point on Lake Champlain, to guard against an invasion by the French. He was commissioned a lieutenant and given the job of instructing the "mattrosses" of the expedition, soldiers who aided the gunners to service their pieces, but took no part in the actual fighting.

On this military junket young Paul rode with the wagoners of the artillery train, and learned something about field arms, knowledge which was to stand him in good stead in two periods later: as a major of artillery militia, and as operator of a cannon foundry in Boston. *(The story of this famous American, told by D. C. O'Flaherty, continues on page 48.)*

Readers' Comment

Blue Book for the Red Cross

IN answer to a plea by the Red Cross for magazines, it is especially pleasing for me to give my BLUE BOOK. For I know, through years of reading enjoyment, what treasures this matchless magazine possesses.

In its pages there is something for everybody and everything for somebody. History of the U. S., gems of information from the world, adventure, fantasy—as evidenced by the "Revolt of the Wild Folk," a poignant moralizing tale—mystery, detective, war, pseudoscientific and scientific stories, comedy, ordinary home yarns, a bewildering variety offered in one package. Some of us prefer certain types, but all of us, are enticed through splendid writing, into dipping into other tales, and inevitably we end up by liking all of them. For this reason, since I know that BLUE BOOK will appeal to everybody, once they are introduced to it, I am particularly proud to include this magazine in my bundle.

No other magazine, nor indeed any three of them combined, offers such a wealth of reading matter of the highest caliber and interest. Frankly, I know of no better way to help our veterans and soldiers, hospitalized and otherwise, to ease the rigors of living, than through reading BLUE BOOK!

Harold Benson

What Makes Us Tick

BLUE BOOK has been my favorite magazine for most of my life; believe it or not, my big brother used to read the stories to me even before I was old enough to read for myself. If I live to be a hundred I shall never forget the enjoyment of hearing the first Tarzan stories; Burroughs' strange stories of the Underworld Pellucidar; the dangerous exploits of the Red Wolf of Arabia and countless other fascinating tales.

Recently I have been trying to analyze your magazine to determine what makes it unique; although it has seen many changes in format and art work, two factors stand out through the years: First, there is always a variety of stories, furnishing something for everyone; second, each writer is allowed and/or encouraged to follow his own personal style and manner of weaving his story; there is apparently no cut-and-dried formula such as too many other magazines compel their writers to follow. This policy of freedom of expression is, I believe, largely responsible for the long and dynamic life of BLUE BOOK.

Just keep on doing as you are.

Spears Ascherfeld

BLUE BOOK

November, 1951 MAGAZINE Vol. 94, No. 1

Ten Short Stories

General Quarters by Jacland Marmur 2
A pre-eminent writer of sea-stories follows an American warship bound for battle.

Slightly Unpredictable by Daniel Price Perkins 9
Mr. Dooley offered the barkeep the residue of $10,000 for free whisky.

The Garnet Pin by Edward L. McKenna 22
He dreams of his recovered youth—and learns he's never lost it.

The World of William Gresham by Nelson Bond 26
The author of "Conqueror's Isle" at his fantastic best.

Farmer with Wings by Peter Dollar 34
A helicopter pilot tries a rescue across a mountain above his ceiling.

The Ram with Great Horns by Jim Kjelgaard 46
"If you ever tell about this," he told the guide, "I'll break your neck."

The Damning Dust by Mackenzie Cottrell 54
An Australian officer spells out the story of a murder in the dusty tracks.

The Lad in the Coyote Skins by Michael Oblinger 66
He took over a Hudson's Bay Company post and overtook a criminal.

Wings Regained by Chet Schwarzkopf 73
A memorable story of the wild swans and their fight for survival.

No Safe Return by Joel Reeve 78
He came back to professional football after long absence.

Two Novelettes

Never Too Late by Octavus Roy Cohen 86
An unusual murder mystery by a very able writer.

The Devil's Game by Wilbur S. Peacock 104
That amazing rapscallion poet François Villon comes back in a thrill-filled adventure.

Stories of Fact and Experience

Night Ambush by Hamilton Greene 14
Our combat artist in Korea writes and illustrates a stirring record.

Spy Hunt in Iran by Thomas Johnson and Fletcher Pratt 40
How American C.I.C. men thwarted the German attempt to cut our supply line to our then ally Russia.

Paul Revere—Man of the People by D. C. O'Flaherty 48
There is a lot to be remembered about him besides his famous ride.

The Meanest Crooks of All by Joseph P. Blank 62
Government checks look like money to many people, and are too easily cashed.

There Are Always Miracles
by Captain Edward P. Stamford, as told to Hubard Kuokka 98
A dive-bomber pilot tells of close air-support operations in Korea.

Wagons West by Samuel Hopkins Adams 118
How the first freighters pioneered the Santa Fe Trail.

Special Features

Military Mascots by Fairfax Downey 25
Poilu, pet of a British World War I regiment.

The Facts of Life—About Color by John Dunlavy 61

Ye Articles of Capt. Kidd's Adventure Galley 117
Engrossed and Illuminated by Peter Wells.

Who's Who in This Issue Inside Back Cover

Cover Design Men of America—Paul Revere
Painted by L. R. Gustavson.

PHILLIPS WYMAN, *Publisher* DONALD KENNICOTT, *Editor*

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is published each month simultaneously in the United States and Canada by McCall Corporation. Marvin Pierce, President; Lowell Shumway, Vice-President and Circulation Director; Edward Brown, Secretary; J. D. Hartman, Treasurer. Publication and Subscription Offices: McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. Executive and Editorial Offices: 230 Park Ave., New York 17, N. Y. MANUSCRIPTS and ART MATERIAL will be carefully considered but will be received only with the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury. SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: $2.50 for one year; $4.00 for two years; $6.00 for three years in U. S. Canada and Pan-American countries (Add $1.00 per year for other countries). Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions to our publication office, McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. IF YOU PLAN TO MOVE SOON please notify us four weeks in advance because subscription lists are addressed in advance of publication date and extra postage is charged for forwarding. When sending notice of change of address give old address as well as new, preferably clipping name and old address from last copy received. NOVEMBER ISSUE, 1951, VOL. LXXXXIV, NO. 1.

Copyright 1951 by McCall Corporation. Reproduction in any manner in whole or part in English or other languages prohibited. All rights reserved throughout the world. Necessary formalities, including deposit where required, effected in the United States of America, Canada, and Great Britain. Protection secured under the International and Pan-American copyright conventions. Reprinting not permitted except by special authorization. Printed in U.S.A.

Entered as second-class matter November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879

THE GREATEST WRITER OF SEA STORIES SINCE JOSEPH CONRAD HERE GIVES US A MOVING PICTURE OF AN AMERICAN WARSHIP BOUND FOR BATTLE.

by JACLAND MARMUR

The Navy was the Power—the sword of a nation's ethos. That was what the gray ships meant.

General

THE night is beautiful—dark, aloof, and coldly beautiful. Dense shapes aloft, cloud masses hurrying, and from the water all the timeless ocean sounds. Loud at night, more intimate in darkness, and the sea hills noisy. Noisy near and far away and from the north and east a knife-edged wind, force five. Clucking at the signal halyards, slapping sprays across the fo'c'stle just before it tips the other way, rapping at the forward gun house. Twin five-inchers down there. Number one. The ship is undisturbed in night and beauty, rocking, her flaring bow wave tumbling foam and falling, lifting, endlessly renewed. She has a number and a name. DD before her number. *Jeremiah Bluben* is her name.

Jeremiah Bluben was a bosun's mate, first class, and he was on the fantail of a tin can in the North Atlantic when torpedoes ripped her open. Jeremiah dragged himself along the depth-charge racks and set them all on safe before his flaming tin can broke in two and sank. Two hundred men survived because he didn't, and they named this ship for him. Her people never called her *Jeremiah Bluben,* though. Jeremiah was a prophet who cried warning in a wilderness: who wanted to remember stuff like that? "Jerry Bluben" sounded better. U.S.S. *Bluben.* Sounded fine. Good, honest name. Some people out in Iowa who never saw the ocean, but whose name was Bluben and who had a son once, thought so too. . . .

So the *Jerry Bluben,* DD Number so-and-so, was making good an angular traverse across the Japan Sea, detached from duty in the south. Full magazines again. Mostly high explosive for main battery. H.E. and Pyrotechnic. Something cooking in the northwest, up Korea way. Chosen, on the navigator's chart. Who ever heard of Chosen? Lousy place to make a liberty, that much was sure. Did some one really say that? Was this dark and throbbing fragment of solidity afloat inhabited? Against the canvas-covered starboard signal bags a shadow stirred, muttering to prove it.

"Sure could use a smoke."

"Cuppa Joe'd be better, Marty. Times like this I wish to hell I'd made a blackgang rate. Them fellas down there warm an' cozy, coffee any time they want."

"Blow it out, Gus."

"Sparky Wheeler says the First Marines've really had it. Oh, them poor bastards. Always the First Marines on the dirty end of the boom."

"Aw, blow it out."

"What they got for us up there? Bombardment, Marty, you suppose? Sparky Wheeler says they might evacuate. What we doin' out here, anyway?"

"You ask the Chief, Gus. The chiefs know everything."

The halyards kept on clucking overhead. A gurgling rush of waters

Quarters

Illustrated by Robert Todd

sounded, fell away, and rose again. The shutters of the signal lamp were chattering, and from that place a bulk of shadow disengaged. It lumbered over where the voices murmured. It kept swaying gently with the motion of the *Bluben's* bridge.

"You and Marty like to catch a drag, Gus? Duck in 'baft the pilothouse," the shadow said. "By the director ladder there. Keep it covered."

"Old Man's in the sea-room, Chief."

"I know it. He's all right."

"Okay, Chief. Thanks."

"Don't take all night."

The night is beautiful. Don't waste it. There is only just so much. So much darkness, so much light. So much youngness, so much hope. Only so much and no more. So much time for joyful laughter in the beauty of the night. So much time to share the clasping arms of your beloved. Only so much and no more. No leaves extended. Only so much time for Jeremiah Bluben, fumbling desperately at the depth-charge racks. So much terror. Then no more. The night is beautiful. Don't waste it. Keep that match light covered, Gus! Keep it quiet. Skipper's in the sea-room catching shut-eye. The Chief says he's all right. Chiefs always know.

In the sea-room is the skipper: Fennely—William Fennely, Commander, U.S.N. Not catching shut-eye, though. Ought to. Can't. The room is Spartan. Bunk against one bulkhead, little desk and mirror over there in glaring light, steel walls all bare. Piping, wiring conduit, strapped arrested in their clustered convolutions. Head and shower for the Captain's comfort. A throbbing place to hide away fatigue, no more.

Cmdr. William Fennely was sitting on the bunk edge in an attitude of patient meditation. On a bulkhead hook his foul-weather jacket, all the ties adrift, slithered sideways suddenly. It hung there while he watched it, then darted back. He seemed to smile. Did he hear forbidden match-heads striking out there on the darkened bridge? Did he hear the murmur of the voices? Quite impossible. It was the ship herself he heard. Perhaps a great deal more. The *Jeremiah Bluben* is a fragment of a fleet, an implementing little splinter of its power funneled out across the oceans of the earth, funneled from a nation's ethos. *Jeremiah Bluben* is a floating fragment of the nation and her ema-

nations reached him. Complicated and confused.

Cmdr. Fennely is lean and tall. He has a scholar's look. Two Navy Crosses and four commendations, one from SecNav too. He would be posted Captain soon. Flag rank one day, if he survived. Bill Fennely had an admiral's flag at the bottom of his seabag, even when he first walked into Bancroft Hall. He has the sadness in his eyes already. Irene told him that. Voluptuous Irene. Tender, dear Irene. His wife Irene. He has the sadness in his eyes already of the combat admirals. Like Lee's behind the spectacles. Like Callaghan's. The ones he knew. The sad eyes holding all the tragic knowledge, hiding the unspoken and unanswered inquiry. Like Norman Scott's, down there around Guadalcanal. That's what Irene told him. Is remembering it why the *Bluben's* skipper seemed to smile? He wasn't smiling, really. Estimating time spans, maybe. Maybe estimating how much hope was left. The *Jeremiah Bluben* is a floating fragment of the nation. Her he knew, her and her population. Sensitive to every sound and movement in her, all his instinct listened, could unerringly record. He could not hear her people speaking. Night and day they spoke and all the concentrated murmuring joined with the throbbing of the thin steel plates, joined with the humming turbines and the whining blowers and the halyards' stutter and the long sea's rush. Unsegregated, all of it could reach him. Cmdr. William Fennely sat in the sea-room, big hands quiet on his knees.

Down the ladders, under all the hatches, were the people of the *Jerry Bluben*. In the wardroom, in the crew compartments, in the Chiefs' mess where the steel wall angulates. Warm and steamy in the Chiefs' mess. Now and then the ocean's shock is felt there. No one bothered with the quick, repeated shudder, the deep muffled sigh and then the shuddering again. Some one snored a steady rhythm in the bunk compartment. Sensible, that man in there. That's what a watch below was for. He chipped his two bucks in the pool to buy the little shortwave radio, but where's the sense in wasting shut-eye on the things that voice was blabbering? A voice from home above the static crackle, lugubriously moaning there was bitter news tonight. It's bitter cold up in Korea. Gab. Gab. Gab. There's no good news tonight.

"Wallaby, why don't you wash him out?"

Wallaby only chuckled—a big man, powerful; dungaree pants and a singlet, and his hard paunch wriggling with his soundless mirth. Not really mirth. A sharper brilliance for an instant in his dark, hard eyes. Sardonic, maybe. Maybe wise. Gig Wallaby—chief bosun's mate. Plenty hash-marks. Plenty years. His hairy forearm stirred, lifting the mug of coffee to his lips, setting it down again.

"Good Joe. Damn good Joe. We should 'a' bought more marmalade. I told you, Pinky."

"Listen to that cracker!" That one was Tussman. Just made Chief. Across the table on the narrow bench, glowering at the little radio. "Picture of Uncle, if you ask me, jamming himself behind the eight ball. And I don't mean Uncle Joe."

"That's an old yarn. Tuss. No contact."

"Nuts! What the hell's the matter with us, anyhow? Who won the war? Who—"

"What war?"

"Okay, Pinky. Cook it smart. How'd you like to be up in that freezing dump? Wors'n' the 'Canal. Oh, them poor bastards! How'd we get here? Only five years, Pinky. Must 'a' took a great big brain. You ever see that UN building in New York? I wish I had the dough it—"

"You can always sell it off for surplus. Simmer down, Tuss. Everything is hotsy-tots back home. Kid brother writes me things are rolling fine. Union dues too high, though. Maybe going higher. He don't like the Navy. Hell, no overtime."

"Funny man." Tussman looked up suddenly at Wallaby. Gig Wallaby was leaning back against the messroom bulkhead in complete repose. Was he laughing at them silently? "What's the joke, Gig?"

"Joke? No joke. We should 'a' bought more marmalade. I told you, Pinky. Damn near gone."

"How you figure, Gig?" The voice from the little bulkhead radio moaned on. They weren't listening. His specious wail of tragedy was safe enough to touch the little hearts of little housewives. It was not for them. "How you figure, Wallaby?" And Tussman wanted really now to know. "I was in the escorts on the Murmansk run. A blind man knew them Russkies had a knife behind their backs. What about the big brains? How come all—"

"You tell him, Wallaby. Tuss wants the word."

"Goddamit, Pinky, yes, I do! We had the whole world by the tail in '45. How come this here's the best way we could twist it? The Japs burned us and we burned them. The Heinies were the ones hung living people up on meat hooks by their collarbones. Like sides of beef. Remember? Tossed kids into concrete mixers. Just for fun. Remember? Cozy now. Our pals. You make some sense from screwy stuff like that?"

"Y'know what, Tuss?" Pinky put his elbow on the table, pointing a finger severely across. "Trouble with you, you're always trying to figure sense to stuff ain't got no sense in it at all. You wanna wind up in a psycho ward? Now look at Gig here." Pinky grinned. "Stands his watches. Does his tour. Makes good liberties. Twenty years next month. He went the whole damned rough and rugged road, and now he's got retirement pay. Any time he wants. And all them fogies, too! All that extra nice longevity pay. Not even a wife to worry about. That right, Wallaby?"

The huge man's paunch stirred a little. Crinkles at the corners of his eyes. Would he really chuckle? His big paw merely reached out to the table to shake out a cigarette and Tussman asked, "How come you never married, Gig?"

"What for?"

"What for, he says!"

"Sure, what for?" That wasn't Wallaby. Wallaby would say no more and Pinky knew it. He'd just sit there with the noiseless laughter in his eyes like sly and wise amusement at the antics of his fellows. Mirth far too pathetic, too profound for sound. "Detached duty, that's for Gig," said Pink. "Pretty little girls are made of sugar and sweet spice. That's what everybody tells 'em when they're in the kindergarten. Worst thing is, when they grow up, they still believe it. Makes a lot of trouble all around. Ask Wallaby. He'll tell you. That right, Gig?"

The big man's cheek-flesh wrinkled. A smile without a sound. Tussman murmured: "Sweet retirement pay! No guns no more. No sea no more. No more tin cans!" His mind ran on in silence: *Kids all grown, and Mabel with that eager twinkle warm as ever in her eyes when I—* "Twenty years all tucked away," said Tussman with envy in his voice. "They won't let you out though now, Gig. Think they will?"

"Ain't gonna put in for it. Ain't even gonna ask."

"What!"

"Gonna stay for thirty."

"You nuts or something? Why? For the luvva green pea soup, you tell me why!"

Wallaby just blinked, eyes bright as ever. Then the brilliance disappeared. Suddenly the eyes were hard—cold and bleak with memory. Only for an instant. No one noticed. No one saw it. Only he did. All of it went flashing like a bolt of lightning past him. Like the crashing, rolling thunder. All of it. All. The hard, long, cruel years. All the stations, all

the ships. Norman Scott's fleet off Cape Esperance. Gunfire over there near Savo Island. Torches flaming in the night. Black silhouettes. The agony of men he knew. Picket ship off Okinawa. Horror in the water, horror slowly drifting by. Tin cans always. Tin can then. Mister Fennely was the Exec. Bridge and pilothouse swept clean, and smoking. No men left there. Not unless you counted what you saw. *Wallaby, the helm! Here comes another Zeke! Can a bosun steer?* Look at him! Look at the Exec. If he can stand up, so can I. *Aye-aye, sir! Right full rudder. Full right now, sir.* And the leaves back home. The citizens back home. The clawing, cackling, bellyaching citizens back home. *Push off, sailor. Go get drunk some other place.* The unfamiliar wilderness of home. *You want to step out with me, Chief? Got to warn you. I'm expensive. Fancy, but expensive. Think your payday'd stand it?* The citizens back home. *Don't you know there's a war on, sailor? Where you been?*

"You hear him, Pinky? Says he's gonna stay for thirty! Why?" That was Tussman again, and he had to know. "For the luvva green pea soup, you tell me why!"

Wallaby was chuckling. He was really chuckling now. They were astonished when they heard it. "Baby," he said, shaking out another cigarette, "baby, it's cold outside."

In the sea-room of the *Bluben,* her commanding officer would never know what they were saying in the Chiefs' mess. But the voices join the incoherent murmuring and all the sea noise and that way it reached him, gathered into one thin throbbing through his ship. The nation's ship. What was he doing in the Naval Service? Perhaps his scholar's mind was giving value to it, purpose and validity. Time now to know. Before the four stripes came. Before—God and his talent grant—before he flew his flag.

Cmdr. Fennely was looking down at the little book of paper matches in his hand. Navy anchor on one side. He turned it over, and the printed legend on it made him smile. It read, *Swiped from Frowzy Fennely.* Irene did that. Irene always printed up a good supply. He smiled again, remembering. "Frowzy"—academy nickname. It would stick until he died. Happened in his Plebe year when an upper classman asked him what the time was and he drew himself to stiff attention, saying the traditional answer, the ancient rigmarole. The third-year man, seeing him excessively immaculate and trim, grinned suddenly and called him Mr. Frowzy. That was it.

Jeremiah dragged himself along the depth-charge racks and set them all on safe before his tin can broke in two.

Plebe year? June Week? When was that? How many years ago? How many years since he told Irene war was man's colossal evil, his most dreadful blight, and no one lovely as she was should ever marry a man of his profession. Too much heartache. Too much pain. How many years since he poured out to her his consecration? There was just law nowhere if men only thought it, feebly spoke it, humbly prayed. Just law nowhere till the power wrote it, till the power held it, made it so. The Navy was the Power. Pure white sword. Sword of a nation's ethos. Strong right arm of law. That was what the gray ships meant, the terrible, the lovely ships. Power for good or servitor to evil. Power that could be the strong right arm of law, or the destroyer of the last hope men would ever have. He knew which muster he would answer. Ensign William Fennely was certain. He was young then. Warm night, warm and beautiful, and all the stars and Irene's fragrance filling it.

"You must never speak like that to anyone," said Irene.

"You mean no one else would understand?"

"I don't want them to, Bill. No one. Only me. Now how long till you'll kiss me? Do I have to beg?"

Speak of it to no one. Never. She was right. Clasp your beloved tightly. There is only so much night. She will understand, or no one will. Speak never. Keep your fingers on your number. Speak never in the wardroom, never in the shoreside club. Speak never of the classmates, comrades, men you'll see no more. . . . Wooly Pelson? Dingbat? PT's, Frowzy. Thought you knew. Ironbottom Sound. No contact. Say, this whisky isn't bad. . . . Sorry. Hadn't heard. Let's have another. . . . Only we are here. Those who aren't are as if they never were. Speak never of them. Never any more. Who won the war? Ask Wooly Pelson. Maybe Dingbat knows. No contact. What

happened to the power. The power and the nation. The terrible, avenging power hurled. The dreadful power skillfully applied. All wasted? Start again. Again pour out the treasure, put away the hope. How long can hope and treasure last?

All the power wasted. Well, who wasted it? It goes back a long, long time, Frowzy. It goes back to Potsdam, Yalta, Teheran. Maybe it goes back a whole lot farther. Who will tell us? Who will speak? Not admirals. Admirals who blunder are plucked out or die, and fleets and men die with them. Only politicians can outlive colossal blunder, tragic error. Only other troops and other admirals can expiate their sin. Maybe it went back to that. Maybe it went back behind the power to where men who forged it sat. Maybe it went even farther. But blight was somewhere. Somewhere blight began. Sometime the fierce zeal in each man for his own thought and his own choice began to waver, and hope wavered with it. Was it then the unsuspected blight began to crawl through all the wildernesses of the city streets? Fright crawled with it, and the fright was everywhere. *We have nothing to fear but fear itself.* The words were noble, but the fear remained. The fear remained and ever after ruled. No recovery from fear. To be a free man, jealous of a freeman's choice, and to accept with pride the personal responsibility is hard and the reward is distant in the threat of hunger. Hunger? Who knew Europe? Who saw Asia? No recovery from fear. We will take a little evil. Just a little evil. Just this once. Tell me, Father, what to do. Only tell us, Father, you will tuck us always in a safe, warm bed and we'll obey. No recovery. Not yet.

Was all the courage, the dynamic spent? Was nothing left of it but profit and high wages, Cadillacs and household gadgets, overtime and television? Fruitful products of the passion, impossible without it, not the faith itself. When would a man arise to tell us where our true gods hide? A man named Abraham, perhaps. A gaunt man with the face of sorrow. A man too humble to exalt his own dominion and whose only promise would be rectitude, a man who would refuse to barter all the nation's future strength and treasure for the little days of his own puny power. Would we listen to him? There is only so much time.

Maybe if he held the tablets up, we'd listen. Maybe we would listen if he told us we have nothing we can offer any longer to another people if the freeman's passion is no longer in our hearts. Without it we have nothing we can offer any longer except guns. Except a few more billions while the billions last. A few more billions and a few more guns. Speak, Abraham! Speak out so we may clearly see the final choice and choose it. Tell us while there still is time. The struggle still remains that all men shall be free, not who shall be the master, who the slave. Speak, Abraham! Tell us why we wield the power, why we can again not waste it. Tell us why we hold the pure white sword.

Cmdr. William Fennely grimaced wryly in the sea-room of the *Jeremiah Bluben,* and stood up. He stood up abruptly, knowing he must break apart such thinking. Completely unprofessional. Politically critical. Severely frowned on in the doctrine of the naval mind. Better think of Irene, clean-limbed, wonderful Irene.

Fennely did—and smiled. Ought to put stuff like that down, Irene would tell him. For the Naval Institute Proceedings? Footnote at the bottom of the printed page. *The thoughts expressed are not to be construed as the opinion of the Department of the Navy or of the Naval Service as a whole.* He smiled again. He needed contact with his fellows. Maybe there was someone in the wardroom. Maybe Lolly would be there. He reached for his foul-weather jacket on its hook, caught it just before it lurched the other way, and stepped out on the darkened bridge.

The noise pounced on him out there, rushing sea noise and the pouring wind. He waited until vision reached him, then moved surely to the pilothouse. The bulking shadows in there all seemed idle. Only the dial faces, disembodied on the bulkhead, glowed, and some were humming. In the Captain's conning chair behind the pilot glass a dark shape stirred, feet dropping quickly to the deck.

"No, no, Madison. Stay where you are," the Captain said. "Just need some coffee."

"Got some here, sir. Still hot, I think."

"Thanks, no. Any word from *Bluebell* yet?"

"No, sir, nothing. Worden says he doubts if we can contact for some hours yet. Heavy atmospherics on the TBS. All the speaker does is squawk."

"Well, I'll be in the wardroom."

"Aye, sir."

Cmdr. Fennely turned aft. No word from *Bluebell* yet. No voice contact yet with Task Group Command up on the east Korean coast where *Bluben* rushed to join. He hoped her five-inch guns would help. Poor devils on a beachhead needed help. Troops always needed help. Where would they find it? He would lay his fire pattern down where ordered. On. Right on. He was sure of that. What else? Down the ladder, in the passage, he went past the Combat Information Center Room. The door was open on a room that was filled with clouds of blue tobacco smoke, men scanning radar 'scopes, a loud-speaker crackling, and an officer bent double with a little boy's face peering down at what he saw on the lit glow of the maneuver-board. A voice came out of CIC, a voice snared from the outer air, a voice behind the static crackle.

"Mudhen, this is *Skylark,"* it was growling as Cmdr. Fennely approached. "Hello, *Mudhen,* this is *Skylark,"* it went on as he walked past. "I say again. I say again—"

The Skipper heard no more. He was in the wardroom passage then. He never learned exactly what it was the voice kept urging, what it wished to say again and again. Something truthful, one could only hope. The Skipper stepped across the weather sill into the *Bluben's* wardroom where the light was, where the warmth was, where Lt. Cmdr. Lolly sat, a big-faced Exec, fanning a spread of cards to the green-covered mess table in front of Ensign Ridley.

"Gin," said Lolly in a voice astonishingly gentle for a man with eyes so hard. "Gin. Have a sandwich, Capt'n? Fresh made. *Bluben* special. Jam and peanut butter. Not bad."

"Thanks, Lolly, yes, I will."

Coffee. Hot as hell and black as sin. The Navy's virtue. Coffee. Always brewing on the bulkhead hotplate by the pantry window. Coffee. Panacea for all ailing souls afloat. What about the souls ashore? Cmdr. Fennely could feel the scalding stuff slide like a comfort past his throat. And like a comfort hear the voices, the familiar wardroom voices. Ridley, fresh from an eight-inch cruiser's gun division, still a little puzzled by the compact intimacy of the tin cans, wanting to call the little ship a bucket but not daring with the Old Man there—Ridley, grinning.

"Never could see sense in that game," Ridley said.

"No sense in any game unless you learn to play it." Lolly's smile was gentle as his voice. He swung his chair, stretching his legs toward the transom. Galbraith was asleep there, snoring quietly. Gun boss. Whenever he expected shooting, Guns liked the transom better than his bunk. At such times, the murmur of the voices soothed his sleep. "Had a little talk with Stafford, Capt'n," Lolly told the middle space.

"Stafford? Oh. Lad on the middle watch?"

"Uh-huh."

"Had him at mast the other day?"

"Now look at Gig, here—not even a wife to worry about! How come you never married, Gig?"

"Uh-huh. Good signalman; fouled up again."

"So?"

"Had a talk. Nice boy. Finally got it out of him. Fresh married. Worried sick. Wife's gonna have a kid. Overdue. Red Cross is helping. He's crazy for her. Last word he had they said it's got to be Cæsarian. He should have heard by now, but when they pulled us out down south we missed our mail. Told him any other time I'd ask the Old Man could we push a dispatch through and get the word for him. Not now. Communications jammed already. Says he knows it, but he's worried sick. Can't blame him." Lolly's gentle smile expanded to a grin. "Say, Skipper, you remember in the *Benning* when you didn't hear till—" Lolly broke off, chuckling. "How is Irene, anyhow?"

"Fine, Lolly. Irene's fine."

"I think I'll get him off report. Ensign Ridley here says no. Right, Rid?"

"That's right, Mr. Lolly. No excuse at all. I'd certainly say no."

"Gonna do it anyhow. Already told Stafford so. More coffee, Skipper?"

"Thank you, Lolly, no."

Hard to leave the wardroom. Hard to leave the pleasant shelter where his people spoke, where Guns, expecting shooting, could find peaceful sleep, soothed by the murmur of his comrades' talk in there. No other shelter anywhere. Only dark night on the bridge. Dark night and cloud shapes scurrying aloft. Wind backing west through north. Feet scuffling, shadows ranging in a line. The new watch mustering, grave voices droning the familiar ritual.

"Relieve the sea detail."

"Relieve the watch."

"Cold as a tomb, hey, Madison? Shove off now! I relieve you."

Quiet settling, the quietness intense, alert. Tumbling sea noise at its outer rim, cold wind assaulting all its ramparts. Lolly was a fine Exec. Sound. Ensign Ridley? He would learn. Ought to speak to Stafford,

offer him the Captain's word of comfort? Better not, the skipper thought. Lolly gave him all the comfort the small gods allowed. The rest was in his own heart—or it wasn't. Lolly was all right. Kept lots of men from Captain's Mast. Kept lots of noses clean. Any word from *Bluebell* yet? What was *Skylark* telling *Mudhen*? Something Stafford's unborn child, compelled to birth, but resenting it, should know? Maybe it was wailing its first pitiful rebellion now. What would it find, when in its growth it would explore the heritage we left? Irene knew. Irene had an instinct, cynical to others, dear and truthful as a flame to him. Lolly asked if he remembered in the *Benning* when his own son was born, six thousand miles away. *We have launched another wielder of the pure white sword!* That's what Irene wrote. He remembered, all right. He remembered everything. And he kept pacing off the *Bluben's* bridge. Steel windbreak forward. Intent shadows peering seaward. Signal lockers aft. Shadows stirring there. Cmdr. Frowzy Fennely kept pacing night away.

The night is beautiful—cold, aloof, and darkly beautiful. The ship is plunging through it. Was the night as beautiful as this when shock and flame erupted in the western ocean, when *Jeremiah Bluben's* lonely terror named her? The night is beautiful. Don't waste it. There is virtue in its core of stillness, wisdom in its heart of quiet, central and unviolated. Could a man with courage reach it? Solitary task. No heralds for a victory. No dirge for the defeat. Cmdr. Fennely, alone, kept marching on the *Bluben's* bridge, her pulsing intimate, her breathing half his own.

Underdecks, the *Jerry Bluben's* people slept, familiar with her throb of power. Little splinter of the nation's power. Pinky, Tussman, big Wallaby asleep now. All asleep down in the Chiefs' mess. All asleep in crew compartments, in the cabins off the wardroom. Speak no more. The time for speech is past. The watch alone is murmuring. But what men said remains. What all men said remains. Part of the pulsing. Part of the throbbing. Part of the fine, far grumbling in the north. That, too, could reach Cmdr. Fennely. Like a thin vibration of the atmosphere it touched him and his march stopped. Thunder? Head upraised against dark night, he listened. Faint, low, broken growling. Gunfire. Who could better recognize it? Gunfire on a ruined beachhead. Big stuff talking far away. The way it talked off Normandy, around Guadalcanal, at Okinawa. Only yesterday. And here it was again. So soon? The Navy guns were talking. U.S.S. *Bluben* slashing northward through the beauty of the night to join.

The guns were talking up there. Navy guns. Cmdr. Frowzy Fennely would be able soon to name them, segregate each caliber, and maybe soon he'd hear again the way big shells go chuffing overhead, mournful and high-sighing in their flight. All right as long as you could hear them. If you didn't, you would hear no more. You'd never walk a flag deck then. Who was the upper classman, anyhow, who first had called him Mr. Frowzy? Never did find out. Should have. How long ago was that? *Just law is nowhere if men only think it, feebly speak it, humbly pray. Just law is nowhere till the power writes it, holds it, makes it so. The Navy was the power. Power of a nation's ethos. Power that could be the strong right arm of law or the destroyer of the last hope men would ever have.* What happens to the power? All the power wasted. Who wasted it? Could power ever be man's servitor and not his master? Who would tell? Are there markers nowhere on the sea? Is there no man ashore to speak for tragic generations? Where is our Abraham?

"First light soon, sir—oh five hundred hours. Shall I sound general quarters?"

The voice at his elbow was Ensign Ridley's, reminding him what he himself had written in his own night order book. Ridley here already? What happened to the middle watch? The Captain stood in silence for an instant, peering at the night, hearing gunfire plainly now, the broken thunder rolling down the wind.

"Yes. You may sound general quarters, Ridley," he said quietly.

He heard the harsh alarm, not stirring, the bosun's whistle piping at the intercom before the hoarse voice cried. Rushing footfalls on the ladders. Steel clang of hatches. Talker in the pilothouse. Talker on the bridge. Battle circuits manned. Taut ship, the *Jeremiah Bluben*. Voice at his elbow droning. Galbraith on the director reporting. Engine control reporting.

"All guns manned and ready."

"All stations manned and ready. Boilers one, two, three. . . . on the line."

Then stillness. Absolute, electric stillness. Ship all buttoned up. First daylight soon. First daylight was a threat again. Daybreak a danger? Odd. How odd! Cmdr. Frowzy Fennely stood motionless behind the windbreak, steel around him, talker like a darker shadow at his side. Waiting for the darkness to dissolve. The night held fast. Battle lookouts peering at it, too, prying it apart. Sea noises all around, the signal halyards cluttering. He could see nothing yet. But his instinct understood the tone and temper and the incoherent murmur through his ship, the nation's ship.

He knew what she would look like when the first pale grayness of the new day showed:

Narrow. Lean. Search radars circling overhead. Armament glittering, the gun snouts up. And forward she would show green water slicing from her where her bow wave flung it wide and boiled it into foam. There! The first pale liquid flow of light seeped through a crevice on the eastern board. No more talk aboard the *Bluben*. She was welded taut, compact, and integral. No confusion here. Confusion was for wastrels, living on the bounty of the land. No confusion here.

Light splinters touched the Captain's cheek. His face looked stern. Cmdr. Fennely was waiting with his people for the ship to show herself. U.S.S. *Bluben*. Fragment of the nation's fleet. Fragment of the power. Destroyer *Jeremiah Bluben*. Soon she would reveal herself. The night was ended. There is only so much night. True daylight growing. Growing fast now. They would see her very soon.

NEXT MONTH!

The Autobiography of a Kamikaze Pilot

"The training is hard and strict. Even though we do our best and are all officers, the instructors accuse us of being careless and spiritless and hit us in the face with their fists. I never counted it up, but it must have been about two hundred times altogether. Even father and mother did not strike us in the face.

"While I was at Himeji, the first Kamikaze Corps was organized, and many of my friends were taken into it. As I didn't have enough training, I was not selected. Perhaps they tell you that the Kamikaze Corps are formed from volunteers, but they are not. They are taken when their turn comes, according to their training hours and skill."

IF NICK WOULD SUPPLY HIM WITH FOOD AND LIQUOR UNTIL SUCH TIME AS HE PASSED ON TO HIS REWARD, MR. DOOLEY WOULD LEAVE TO NICK THE BALANCE OF THE $10,000. BUT NOW MR. DOOLEY LOOKED LIKE GOING ON FOREVER. HAVING FINISHED THE SONG, HE WAS QUOTING OUTLANDISH POETRY TO A COUPLE OF TRUCK DRIVERS.

by

DANIEL PRICE PERKINS

Illustrated by Stuart Hay

Slightly Unpredictable

NICK looked down the bar, mentally computing the take, as was his custom late of evenings. A sigh shuddered through his squat ex-wrestler's body. He was doing pretty good, but Mr. Dooley's glass was nearly empty.

Old Mr. Dooley himself was in fine form. "I have lived a full life," he remarked to any of the other customers in earshot. "I use the adjective advisedly. I have no ends yet untied, no projects unaccomplished. 'Tis ready I am to go back into Nirvana, Cosmos to absorb me. Or, if need be, I will serve my stretch in Limbo, proceed from thence to a cloud and sit upon it, playing a harp."

Several people nodded and murmured. Old Mr. Dooley was popular at the Nick Agropolis Bar and Grill; his conversation, whether understood or not, was accepted as a friendly fact of nature, like the climate or the music from the juke-box. "A controlled despair," he continued gayly, "a recognition of the imminence of catastrophe, is the only possible position for the thinking man today. Leprechaun to Bertrand Russell," he added, obviously pleased with the figure. "Pixie to Savonarola. . . . A bit of a nightcap, my Dionysus?"

"Coming right up," said Nick dully. The Irish whisky that was Mr. Dooley's favorite tipple was low in the bottle. Mr. Dooley was on the point of establishing a new personal record for the twenty-four hours just past.

Nick mixed the drink and set it before Mr. Dooley. "My benefactor!" said Mr. Dooley warmly. He took a long refreshing swallow, then wiped his lips with a snowy handkerchief. "Consider the pampered cherished wise men of the past," he suggested. "The dreamers, philosophers, nurtured in luxury by their warrior kings. Muse on this felicitous, this hallowed brotherhood down the ages: the thinker, if he wishes so to employ his gifts, can always manage to be nourished pleasantly by the man of action. Is it not a beautiful, even a holy thing?"

"I guess so," said Nick. "If you say so."

Mr. Dooley chuckled approvingly and began to sing one of the ballads favored by the late John McCormack. Other revelers joined in, producing a harmony of sorts. A teetotaler, Nick often found the antics of his clientele distasteful; his present misery was acute, caused by the aspect of Mr. Dooley in such robust health and vigor.

IT had been a very different Mr. Dooley who, three months ago, had first come into the bar. Lean and draggled, his tall frame bent over—he'd been nothing but a beat-up old alcoholic nearly crying for a drink. Nick, normally steadfast in such matters, had had a moment of freakish generosity, the old bum looked so down, and had parted with, on highly speculative credit, a drink of the Irish whisky the watery old eyes had fastened on so yearningly. Mr. Dooley had thanked him, murmured something about "the rain from heaven falleth," and had wandered out—to return, that same evening, with a proposition for Nick's consideration.

"You may search everywhere," caroled Mr. Dooley. "But none can compare—" He sneezed.

According to Mr. Dooley, his son was opposed to drinking and had a tendency to hustle Mr. Dooley into sanitariums for cures. While in the last one, Mr. Dooley had found upon the floor of his room a memorandum dropped there by a specialist who had examined him. He was, according to the memorandum, in very bad shape indeed.

At this point in the narrative, Mr. Dooley had contrived, weirdly enough, to look saintly and pitiful. "And ready I am to go," he had told Nick, rolling his eyes upward. "But the loneliness, the clinical chill of that institution, for my last days on earth —'twas more than I could endure."

So he had walked out and refused to return. Whereupon his son had washed his hands of him, substituting for filial care, an irrevocable trust— Mr. Dooley had with him the letter from the bank—in the amount of ten thousand dollars, to be paid out to Mr. Dooley at the rate of seventy-five dollars monthly, he to have testamentary disposition of whatever was left when he died.

"It buys me the bread of life," he'd said bitterly, "but not the music. Or *vice versa,* which I tried." Glancing down at his shabbiness and emaciation, he had added thoughtfully: "There were drawbacks."

If Nick would supply him with food and liquor until such time as he passed on to his reward, Mr. Dooley would leave to Nick the balance remaining of the ten thousand dollars. It had looked good; it had looked perfect.

Mr. Dooley wanted maybe a pint of Irish a day, with a drink or two extra for special occasions. Mr. Dooley didn't eat much. Say the whole business came to forty, fifty clams a week; give Mr. Dooley three months, even six; pay up for a decent funeral, and you're still in for a nice piece of change.

But now, three months later, Nick was beset by doubts and apprehensions. Mr. Dooley was stepping up his consumption—as he himself had explained affably to Nick, the real stuff was not only absorbed more beneficently into the tissues, but it could be accepted in larger quantities. Mr. Dooley was eating expensively, mostly the New York cut. But worst of all, far from growing weaker day by day, as he had as good as promised, Mr. Dooley now looked like going on forever.

Mr. Dooley, having finished the song, was quoting outlandish poetry to a couple of truck drivers. Nick shifted his bulk and scratched his head. Day-dreaming, he visualized a swiftly-passing truck knocking off Mr. Dooley as he stepped from the curb; a cake of soap Mr. Dooley could slip on in the bathroom; a fatal germ sneaking up on Mr. Dooley and smiting him down. But hell, Mr. Dooley never even had a cold!

Wistfully, Nick imagined Mr. Dooley with a cough, then chills and fever, then a merciful coma before the swift end. Winter, reluctantly giving way to spring, was producing some tricky weather, but Mr. Dooley never went anywhere but back to his room when the bar closed. Weather wasn't any help, with Mr. Dooley never out in it.

A soft voice penetrated his meditations: "Man, dear," said Mr. Dooley.

Nick reached out automatically for the bottle, but Mr. Dooley shook his head. "'Tis wistful I am this night," he said. "Filled with nostalgia. Could an old man, footsteps faltering near the brink of a nameless eternity, ask a favor?"

"Sure," said Nick, with resignation.

"My beautiful wife," said Mr. Dooley in a far-away voice, "dead these many years. My colleen Mavourneen —tomorrow is the day of her birth. I've a fancy to lay a flower on her resting-place, if you would be so kind as to convey me thither. After Luke comes on, of course."

"Huh?" said Nick, incredulous. "You mean you want to go for an auto ride?" He glanced at the front windows, where even now bright drops splashed the darkness.

"Another day, if 'twould suit you better."

"Another day!" said Nick heartily. "What's the matter with tomorrow? Nothing to it—be a pleasure!"

The cemetery to which Mr. Dooley directed Nick was on the outskirts of town. They tooled along, Mr. Dooley chatting and taking occasional sips from a bottle he had foresightedly brought with him. *"My wild Irish rose,"* warbled Mr. Dooley. "Curious,

isn't it," he broke off to observe, "my tastes in most art forms so sophisticated, I yet enjoy the saccharine obviousness of the Irish ballads. A touch of simplicity in a complex personality," he added with complacence. "*The sweetest flower that blows—*"

The grave was marked with an impressive headstone, located in a well-kept plot. "And it's I will lie beside her soon," said Mr. Dooley deeply, depositing his bouquet. *You wouldn't kid me, would you,* Nick asked him silently.

A fitful sunlight had struggled with fog, but now in the twilight a fine misty rain began to fall. They hurried back to the car, but when Nick stepped on the starter, the engine coughed and sputtered before it caught. They had hardly made it to the highway when the car stopped. "If I ain't a dope!" said Nick. "We're out of gas."

"Ah, well," said Mr. Dooley blithely, "'tis the sort of mishap might befall any of us."

Nick, avoiding Mr. Dooley's eye, said: "Want to walk along with me to a gas station, or would you want to wait in the car?"

"I'll go with you," said Mr. Dooley. "'Twould indeed be churlish of me to permit you to endure alone the rigors incident to an expedition undertaken in my behalf."

By now it was dark, and the rain had begun to come down in good earnest. "*You may search every where,*" caroled Mr. Dooley, suiting his long stride to Nick's short legs, "*But none can compare—*" He sneezed.

By the time they had reached a filling station, Mr. Dooley was sneezing steadily. By the time they had got a can of gas and a boy had been prevailed upon to drive them back to the car, Mr. Dooley was coughing as well.

Mr. Dooley got in and fell upon the half-empty bottle with glad gasping cries. "The cup that cheers, invigorates and restores," he chattered. "The very spring of life itself." He held the bottle out to Nick. "Better have a slug—ah-choo, *ah-choo,* ah-*choo!*"

"Never touch it," said Nick, sneezing too. "Thanks just the same."

Nick was in the hospital only two days. The new treatment for pneumonia took over splendidly. The room was fourteen bucks a day, plus the cost of the solid-gold drugs and injections. Add twenty bucks for the relief bartender, and you had a C-note knocked right out.

Mr. Dooley visited him twice, bringing him roses once, and a new magazine the second time. Mr. Dooley had helped around the bar, too, as he told Nick solicitously upon Nick's rather weak and shaky return. "And it's I myself that am the testimonial to your excellent whisky," he said. "For surely it saved me a disagreeable head cold. Now don't be fretting yourself," he added reassuringly, "for it's certain I'll be taken right off one of these days, all in the wink of an eye."

"Well—uh—er—no hurry," Nick said despondently, breaking open, at Mr. Dooley's cheery suggestion, a fresh bottle of Irish to celebrate.

It wasn't until a safety campaign, observed on television, pointed out the dangers of smoking in bed, that Nick got a ray of hope. He knew that Mr. Dooley smoked in bed; he had on occasion, conveyed a semi-comatose Mr. Dooley to his room and had seen, on the bedside table, cigarettes and an ash-tray. And your passed-out drunk was something you couldn't wake up with a charge of TNT. Smoke and fumes, filling the room, should serve to ease Mr. Dooley gently into that hereafter he was always yakking about.

The next time Mr. Dooley drank himself blotto, Nick, shoving him up the stairs and into his room, mused on the possibilities of such an accident. With considerable difficulty—but ever mindful of that ten thousand (or what might be left of it) he got Mr. Dooley ready for repose and toppled him over into a supine position on his bed. Mr. Dooley began at once to snore.

Nick stood erect. He lit a cigarette and gazed about him. Beside the small table a wastebasket yawned temptingly, half-full of cigarette stubs, burned matches, miscellaneous bits of paper. Suppose the ash-tray were to contain an imperfectly extinguished butt; suppose the ash-tray were to be emptied into the wastebasket.... The room was small, with a low ceiling. The one window was closed; it looked, in fact, as if it had not been opened since the turn of the century.

He looked back to the long limp body. Slowly, trancedly, he laid his cigarette in the ash-tray, dumped the contents into the waste-basket, then watched, wide-eyed, until a bit of paper smoked and smoldered into a tiny blaze.

He tiptoed to the door and switched off the light. A faint whisper followed him: "My Dionysus, man dear!"

Nick hesitated. Surely someone would call the fire department before Mr. Dooley would actually burst into flame. . . . Then he turned back, a prey to indecision, staring down at the basket.

His hand was stretched out to pick it up, when from behind him there were stirrings and rustlings. "Bless my soul!" said Mr. Dooley. In the faint light from the basket's blaze, Nick saw Mr. Dooley pick up a glass from the bedside table—the medicinal morning-after dilution of spirits and water—and throw it at the basket, extinguishing the blaze and breaking the glass.

Nick stepped back. His rubber sole slipped on a small wet spot on the bare floor and his feet flew out from under him. A circle of spangled light, similar to the devices used in comic strips to dramatize a violent blow, burst onto his vision; then he saw no more.

This time, Nick was in the hospital four days. There was no concussion; the blow on the head had produced merely an egg-sized lump. But somehow, in falling, he had aroused the sleeping threat of an old knee injury, and the doctor warned him that it must have proper care if it were not to cause permanent incapacitation.

This time, he had a better room. The nurse told him his father had ordered it for him, because the best was none too good.

"Father!" he yelped.

The nurse looked surprised. "The old gentleman who came in with you in the ambulance. Isn't he your father?"

"No," moaned Nick. And the thought of the sixteen bucks a day, the electrotherapy and the bandages, started his head to aching so bad the nurse had to give him a hypodermic.

He could hobble around pretty well in a small cast when they let him go. Back at the bar, Mr. Dooley had taken it upon himself to serve as relief boy—a kindly economy measure. He told everybody about his narrow escape from a fiery death. "And it was my Dionysus who saved me, the stout-hearted lad!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Dooley.

Days passed. Nick's despondency deepened. Mr. Dooley wasn't going to get sick; Mr. Dooley carrying his own heating system about with him in a bottle, wasn't even going to take cold. Nor was he going to have an accident; he wasn't the type. Mr. Dooley wasn't going to die, ever.

Along with his despondency, Nick was aware of a mounting indignation. Mr. Dooley was foxing him, but good. Mr. Dooley, remaining alive, was welshing on his end of the deal. *Boy,* he thought over and over, *was I took!*

DESPITE a native kindness, as well as a native fear of the law, Nick began to have opium-like hallucinations of himself clubbing Mr. Dooley to death, blowing him up with dynamite, even choking the breath out of the skinny old neck with his bare hands. He knew, of course, that he would never resort to any such expedients. All he could do was wait and hope for some kind of a miracle that would remove Mr. Dooley before all the money was used up.

And then one morning Mr. Dooley strode into the bar wearing a new look of noble purpose. "Man, dear," he said, "you've been good to me. Not only have you provided my frugal physical requirements, but your sturdy presence has upheld my soul." He paused, eyes swimming in tears at the beauty of the thought. "'Tis a true *rapport* I feel, a kinship."

"Uh—much obliged," said Nick, reaching for the whisky. He poured out a drink but as he picked up the soda bottle, Mr. Dooley halted him with an imperious wave of the hand.

"No," said Mr. Dooley firmly. "I feel under an obligation to be more economical. Add water, plain water. Remember, a penny saved is a penny earned."

Nick, speechless, poured in water. Because a dreadful thought with Mr. Dooley's words—a thought that must have been knocking at the back of his mind for a long time—had come to life: Mr. Dooley might not only drink up the whole ten grand; he might well go on, far past it! Nick, taking a loss, would yet have to continue to pour expensive whisky into Mr. Dooley for the sole gloomy benefit of salvaging as much of his investment as possible.

That's it, he thought, setting his teeth. *You can push a guy just so far.* Chicken heart or no chicken heart, he was going to bump off Mr. Dooley. In some way, of course, that he wouldn't get caught.

The sooner the better, was only common sense. After a careful consideration of ways and means, he decided to drown Mr. Dooley in Echo Lake Park.

On the first mild spring day that business was slack, he invited Mr. Dooley to go for a nice boat-ride with him. After a slight disagreement about supplies—Nick as a thrift measure advocating a pint rather than the customary fifth, and on inspiration pointing out that it fitted more neatly into the coat pocket; Mr. Dooley reflecting on this fashion note with an open mind, finally agreeing—they set out.

The lake was tranquil and flower-bordered. Nick selected one of the boats that had its own little fool-proof electric motor, and they clambered in. Mr. Dooley settled himself in the stern and took a hearty swig on the pint. *"There's a little bit of heaven fell from* OUT*—the sky one day,"* he caroled. *"And settled in the ocean* IN *a most peculiar way."*

Nick steered the boat around the lake, then back and forth across it. Hah! Just what he needed: a submerged rock, marked by a buoy, approximately equally distant from each shore.

THEY chugged about, Mr. Dooley singing at the top of his lungs. After a while, the other boats went back to the landing. Dusk fell. Visitors were leaving the park. Mr. Dooley stopped singing awhile to talk, quoting from the Bible about the Lord was his shepherd, and he would lie down in green pastures.

You said it, chum, Nick told himself grimly. He swung toward the buoy. From behind him, Mr. Dooley began to sing again, this time in a playful ragtime: *"Brighten the corner where—you—are—"* and Nick had to admit to himself it was kind of too bad, the old boy was certainly one to have a good time out of life.

Still he *was* old, and he *did* say he was ready to go. Drowning *was* a merciful death, and a person *ought* to keep their part of a bargain. None the less, Nick hesitated, steering the boat in indecisive circles. It was awful hard to work yourself up to the point, even when you thought you'd already done it. When it came right down to the business itself, maybe, after all—

And then Mr. Dooley himself, all happy and unknowing, gave Nick's purpose the final needed stiffening. Nick looked around, and Mr. Dooley, with a pixie-like smile, tossed the empty bottle over the side. And drew from another pocket *another* full pint of Irish!

Nick's hands froze on the wheel. He heard his own voice, mounting to a roar: "That does it. That's *it!*" He swung the wheel over hard, headed straight for the buoy. There was a tremendous crashing, ripping sound, and in what was only an instant, the boat had filled and sunk beneath them.

Dark cold waters closed over his head.

NICK lay still, eyes shut. He did not know where he was, or how he had got there, but as his consciousness gradually returned, he became aware that he was warm and that his insides didn't hurt him any more. His thoughts drifted back, slowly recreating the recent past.

The boat-ride, the little motor, the flowery banks. Mr. Dooley's singing, Mr. Dooley's yakkety-yak, the empty bottle over the side, and the new full one. The crash and sinking.

The unexpectedly stinging cold of the water. He shuddered now as the memory came to him: the terrible cramp that had jabbed and clutched at his vitals, robbing him of strength, of breath; his agonized floundering, doubled up in panic. The brief futile gasps.

He breathed a long grateful sigh. He had no recollection of being hauled out of the lake, but he must have been rescued by life-guards, or whatever provision the city lake authorities made for retrieving any taxpayers who fell in.

And then like a great white light it hit him: Mr. Dooley must be dead.

It was a certainty—the icy water, the distance from shore, his own near-drowning. From the way he himself felt now, a young and vigorous man—the all-gone exhaustion, the still-apparent dizziness and languor—he realized he must have been nearly gone when whoever it was that did it had fished him out. There could be no

chance that Mr. Dooley, old and weak, could have survived the experience, none at all.

Mr. Dooley was dead. No more jabber, jabber, jabber. No more Dionysus, philosophers, Irish songs, goofy poetry. No more, "Another small one, my boy," and the three-fifty wholesale Irish lowering in the bottle. No more worries. What was left of the ten grand was in the bag—and not a minute too soon!

With his eyes still closed, Nick turned his head on what seemed a nice soft pillow, and to his utter amazement, felt two tears force themselves under the lids. Mr. Dooley was dead, and he, Nick, who had wanted him to be dead more than he had wanted anything else in the world, was crying.

It must be because he'd let a man die, wrecked a lousy little boat and tipped an old bum into the lake, let him drown, same as murdered him. He'd let Mr. Dooley, poor old thing, die a dreadful death. Two more tears followed the first.

"Now, man dear," said a soft sympathetic voice in his ears.

He jerked his head around and opened his eyes. His head retaliated by permitting something to hit him square between the eyebrows with a blunt instrument. After a moment, the pain died down enough for him to see where he was—lying on his own bed in his own room—and who had spoken: Mr. Dooley.

He looked spruce and chipper. "My Dionysus," he murmured, bending closer, in solicitude. "All is well."

"How," said Nick faintly. "What—"

"There now," said Mr. Dooley. "'Twould be well for you to hold your questions for your returning strength. Suffice it to say that I was able to support you, even in your sodden weight, until the rescue boat arrived. Suffice it to say that artificial respiration magically supplied by a pulmotor eventually restored your suspended inhalations and exhalations. They were very competent, the police force." He smiled dreamily. "I took a certain tempered pleasure in observing them perform a worthy function, for a change."

"But—how—you held me up."

"Why, yes," said Mr. Dooley soothingly. "I merely put my feet down. The lake, I'm told, is scarcely six feet in any part. I walked to where you were as quickly as is possible when nearly immersed, and pulled you to the surface. I held you thus, nose above water, until the rescue boat arrived."

"So," said Nick dully. "You saved my life."

"I too was at the receiving hospital," Mr. Dooley continued chattily. "And so 'tis an ill wind that blows nobody good; for the doctor there, upon my mentioning the specialist's prognosis, laughed it to scorn. He said"—here Mr. Dooley smirked in deprecation—"that I should no doubt live to be a hundred if I go on as I am now."

Nick closed his eyes again. "I could 'a' told him that."

"'Tis my conclusion," said Mr. Dooley, "that the dreadful measures of the sanitarium must be held guilty for my deplorable condition. Which means," the quiet voice went on, "that we must change our gentlemen's agreement. I, my boy, will become an active partner in the business. 'Tis the sort of career for which I've always had a fancy."

An active partner. The words stung Nick from his lethargy. "Now, wait a minute," he began, gulping.

"It will be a fine alliance," Mr. Dooley interrupted smoothly. "The man of action upheld and supplemented by the thinker. For example, in the little episode of the lake—the physical advantage of my height I must take no credit for. But the expedient of finding out if one can stand in water that is *in theory* deep enough to drown one, would occur only to the man used to thinking."

The warm, gentle voice died into silence. The words slowly, fatally, sent their import to Nick's understanding: Mr. Dooley knew! Mr. Dooley had him where he wanted him, but good. On and on, into a limitless future, Mr. Dooley would be right there, talking away and drinking up the profits.

With a pixie-like smile, Mr. Dooley drew from another pocket another *pint!*

"My Dionysus," said Mr. Dooley fondly, bending near.

Nick raised his eyes. In the worn and smiling old face there was understanding and a kind forgiveness. Mr. Dooley knew what Nick had intended, but he also knew how Nick would have felt if he'd really put an end to Mr. Dooley's life—knew not only how dreadful would have been his guilt, but how lonesome he would feel.

Of course! That was it—he'd be *lonesome* without Mr. Dooley! That was why he'd cried. He wouldn't like the Nick Agropolis Bar and Grill *at all* without Mr. Dooley. The other customers were a bunch of damn dull jerks. "Man, dear," said Nick, and sighed. Suddenly he raised his head a trifle. "You don't smell right," he added, puzzled. "Not anyways like you usually do."

"Oh, that," said Mr. Dooley negligently. "Perhaps it is my breath you find unperfumed, now that I've left off drinking. Oh, perhaps an occasional beer—"

"Beer?" bleated Nick.

"Of course," said Mr. Dooley chidingly. "The Irish whisky could never be for the likes of me. 'Tis far and away too expensive for a partner in the business."

"Uh—uh," said Nick in a decisive negative. "You stick to the Irish; you're doin' okay on it." He grinned up at Mr. Dooley, and Mr. Dooley grinned back. "I won't hear of it," he said firmly, "you takin' any chances on your health."

Hamilton Greene wanted to go to Korea as our combat artist. We hesitated about helping a man to stick his neck out like that; but inasmuch as he caught a bullet through the stomach in World War II, we figured he knew what he was getting into, and arranged for his accreditation. Here follows the first of a remarkable series of front-line reports, illustrated by the author.

Night Ambush

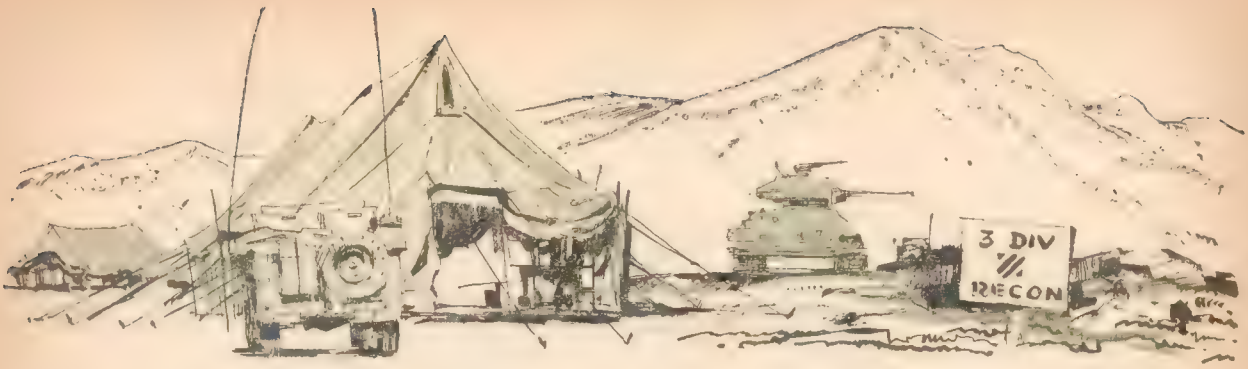
by HAMILTON GREENE

"IT'S all very well for Division to say: "Go on, get us a prisoner—we need one bad. Not a hapless Korean farmer, mind you, and not some Commie deserter who's been filtering down from Wonsan for the past five months, looking for a chance to surrender. What Division wants is a Chink G.I. right out of his hole who knows what's on his right and left and what's behind him. And not a dead one, either."

Sure, you can go out and set up an ambush in the dead of night and maybe intercept some Chink patrol that is creeping down the valley floor with the idea of doing to you what you want like blazes to do to him. But when the trap is sprung, and the guys leap out with clubbed guns, and the Chinamen yell and try to run, and the grease-guns chatter—well, then it's only percentages that can guarantee you might stay alive and have at least one Chink left who still breathes. If they're all dead, then Division will raise hell, and it's all to be done over again.

When I first met Major Frank Speigelburg's Third Division Recons, the sweat was on. That was during the hot hectic days of last July, while the peace talks drooled along in Kaesong, and the Commies were building up and the front-line divisions were wondering what the hell, what gives! So it was a case of get a live talking Chinaman, or it was somebody for chewing.

At the time, the best chance for a capture was at night—but only because the Chinks habitually ran their patrols in the dark, usually during the early hours just before dawn. They gave you no choice. Americans would far rather gather a little task force and crack a stray Chink detachment in broad daylight, using the conventional attack procedure of assault and cover fire. They do it that way sometimes, and get their prisoners too. But if the Chinks are playing it cozy and only patrol at night, then you have to do it their way.



Not that night ambush doesn't have its advantages. Concealment is better, and surprise is greater. Psychological effect of darkness is not as bad on the surpriser as it is on the surprisee. If the rehearsal has been meticulous, you can be reasonably sure you won't shoot into your other friendlies. But hell's bells, the chances of snafu are not happy to contemplate!

Your anchor men can freeze, foul up or bug. The Chinks can catch you with an ambush of their own. It's happened plenty of times. You can pick up, say, a shattered leg, and how in hell are the guys going to drag you out over five miles of hills and gulleys, including two rivers, with an alerted enemy looking for you. Let's not kid about it. It takes insides for night patrol.

To begin with, you have to plan it. You gather in front of the situation map in the operations tent and weigh the possibilities. You look carefully at the enemy positions marked in red grease pencil on the acetate overlay. You gauge the contour lines and visualize the terrain. And you consider how the Chinks have been acting lately.

You can figure, with luck, which trail the Chinks are apt to come down on a patrol of their own, and you begin from there. Just how big a patrol they might use is something you have to pick out of the air, but your intuition had better be clicking, because that will be the key to your own patrol: Number of men, weapons, firepower, communications.

Any platoon leader will do the job well. You have Neal Downey, John Norton, Jack Hays, and Marty Burke, the exec. They've all caught Chinamen at one time or another. All very good men.

Point to consider is accurate liaison with whatever friendly units have ac-

The thing begins in the operations tent. Where is the best place to waylay an enemy patrol? What's the safest way to get there? Which platoon? How many men?

This one they dope out as a fourteen-man job. The platoon leader takes the boys out of camp, and they run a very careful rehearsal. Every man has a specific function. "Anchor" men will flank the main body along the trail, will signal size of enemy patrol by yanking a wire reaching back to leader. This time all will stay on one side of trail to avoid cross-fire into each other.

Platoon Sergeant Bill Mitchell, anchor man.

cess to the same sector; otherwise your ambush may turn into a gruesome fire fight with a bunch of ROK's (South Koreans) or PEFTOK's (Filipinos) or some other wild outfit who are also running a patrol, but who have neglected to tell anyone else about it. Don't think that hasn't happened, either.

Now you have the ambush spot picked, the force determined and the leadership. Next, you will run a rehearsal on a piece of nearby ground that closely approximates the ambush spot. And who will simulate the enemy?

Well, sometimes they practice on a bunch of guys who have been sent out on a routine check of the company perimeter—without being told they are playing Chinamen. Are they surprised! But if they're good G.I.'s, they may get an idea of what's up, and they'll sneak around looking for a chance to ambush the ambush. Then who's surprised! But what the hell—that's all part of it.

THE platoon leader chooses methods of surprise attack that he has found through experience work best for him. In this, Speigelburg gives

Recons often use light tanks if patrols may have need of supporting fire-power. Not necessary this time, however. This one will be strictly cloak and dagger.

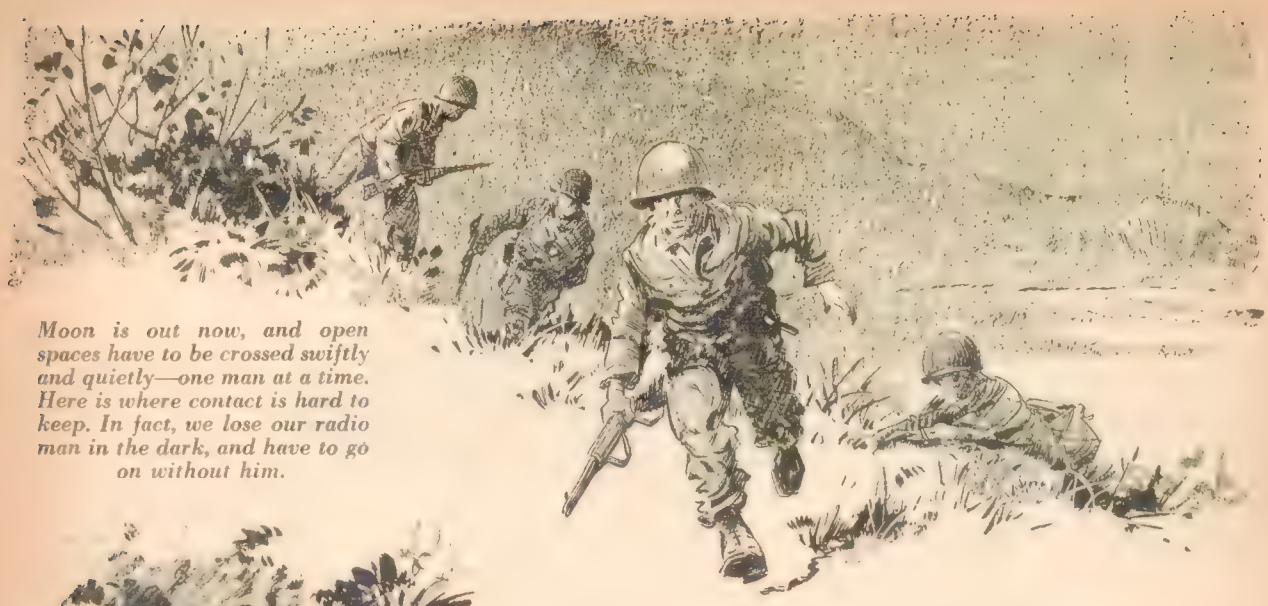
Plan is finally perfected. First two approaching Chinamen will go by main body, to be jumped by leader and end man—remainder of enemy to be ambushed point-blank—killed if necessary.

the platoon leader a free hand. By the same token, the leaders give each man his own choice of weapon. Every last man in the army has a preference.

You'd think they'd use .45's or Tommy guns along with knives, brass knuckles, and other strange hardware designed for close in-fighting, but the fact is, they don't. The anchor men will use automatic fire because they will spray the escape routes when the Chinks try to bug. What they usually use is not the heavy BAR, or cumbersome Tommy, but the grease gun —a light-weight machine pistol similar to the German Schmeiser. But for knockdown, drag out, bring-'em-back-

PAD-PIO
APPROVED
DATE 24 Aug
INITIALS

At sundown, the patrol moves out. They ride M-39 personnel carrier up to our front lines and perhaps a mile beyond it. this time it will be d. Patrol will then leave the vehicle, strike out into enemy country on foot.



Moon is out now, and open spaces have to be crossed swiftly and quietly—one man at a time. Here is where contact is hard to keep. In fact, we lose our radio man in the dark, and have to go on without him.

PAD PIO
APPROVED
DATE 9 Aug
INITIALS

alive techniques, most soldiers depend on the rifle. Held at high port and pushed into a man's face, the M-1 can be a great discourager. Besides, when you fire, it's so damned accurate.

There will be .45's on some belts, of course. Grenades too. But that's last-resort stuff. You never can tell how a fight is going to develop.

The main thing about the rehearsal is to have every man oriented on his allowed field of fire, and to be sure he thoroughly understands the signals. If the enemy force is too large, everyone will lie doggo, hold his breath and let them go by. At such a time, the man with a sneeze will be very unpopular.

Signals, weapons, communications net with company on the 300 Radio—everything and everybody is checked and checked again.

g gets tougher. Same river to be forded twice—current is strong, footing treacherous. Keeping weapons and ammo dry becomes Problem No. One. Water is not cold, but wet clothes will freeze us during early morning hours.

Have to approach these abandoned farm huts carefully. You never know what they hide. Except the fleas. You can be sure about them.

First snafu! As we approach our objective, our own artillery lays a concentration just where we expect to set up ambush. We have an alternate site however, and will use that one. The hell with sweating out our own gunfire!

Finally we're in place. Anchor men out and wire set up. Four hours' wait now. Cold, bone weary, eaten alive—but tense and ready.

Here it comes—the jerks as anchor m out approaching ten of them!

But something goes haywire! A split second before the jump, Chinks must have seen or heard something. Without warning they fire into the bushes, and then it's really in the pan—plan slides to hell and gone. Every gun banging now—Chinks going down, Chinks bugging back. Anchor man ...ns constant automatic fire on trail ...vent escape. Some Chinks get ...; most just die. Other things ... good, but we'll skip that.

It's down on paper. It's been rehearsed. As far as G-2 is concerned, it's in the bag. They can sit back and rub their hands. Now all that's left is to go do it.

So you walk out into enemy territory for mile on mile, half bent over, and spread out yards apart. You sweat out separation in the dark. You climb banks, stumble over bumpy cornfields, slosh through rice paddies, trip and fall, twist your ankle—wade waist-deep through rushing black water, slop along with squishing boots and triphammer heart—while your body shifts from soaking sweat to shaking cold.

Then you lie in weeds, with insects getting a new lease on life from the insect repellent on your face and hands—or maybe it's that the sweat has washed it all off.

Can't smoke, can't whisper, can't swat the mosquitoes, can't doze off. . . .

The payoff—a Chink who can still walk and say his piece. This one tripped and fell. And lucky for him.

PAO PIO
APPROVED
DATE 9 Aug
INITIALS

God, no. You certainly can't doze. But brother, you can still imagine.

WELL, none of these things come out the way you expect. If the enemy always acted according to plan, war could be fought with push-buttons. A single Chink, a little smarter than most, can turn the best-planned team-play into a dozen individual battles. They've had some dillies.

A few nights before I went out, a friendly patrol that was bigger than platoon size, ran into a Chinese ambush before they could get their own ambush set up. The Chinks not only killed and wounded an impressive percentage, but captured a ROK sergeant who had our situation map with him. Until appropriate shifts in the line could be effected, the Chinks had a perfect blueprint of the defenses in our sector. That's not good.

When we get a Chinaman, however, we only pray he's an articulate one. Some of them don't even know their own name. Really! But if they are on the ball, they can be a big help. What I mean is, if they know anything, they'll talk. That's why our men keep going out after them.

And believe this: Whether the ambush is successful or unsuccessful, the qualities of courage and endurance necessary to make the attempt are not given to many. At the time of writing, we aren't saying much about numerical losses, but the Recon outfits have had many a good guy who won't come home.

The picture sequence I've drawn here may give you some kind of an idea of what these deals look like—but only in snatches. Sketches weren't drawn on the spot, of course. But under such circumstances a guy's observation can be fairly sharp and his memory trustworthy. In any case, all I've tried for is a brief impression of a typical night patrol.

AS I said, these ambushes don't run to pattern. The methods vary and the results vary, but the heat and sweat, and the wet and cold remain the same. So if you look at these sketches, try to simulate aching eyeballs and pounding chest, perhaps you'll get a faint idea of how these guys earn their money.

Getting light—let's go home. We got what we came for. Let's hope he's worth the cost.

The Garnet Pin

THE STRANGE AND MOVING STORY OF A MAN WHO REDISCOVERED HIS YOUTH.

by EDWARD L. McKENNA

IT was a cold, raw, typically Philadelphian spring day—they get their spring weather in October, as a rule. Mr. Charles Francis Judson was proceeding briskly toward his club, on Walnut Street, and trying to decide whether he should have pepper pot, and asparagus on toast, or a few broiled oysters and fried tomatoes, for his lunch. There are graver problems, but at that moment, Judson had few of them. There was his weight, to be sure, but a few games of squash and the avoidance of the extra Martini before dinner should take care of that. He was a big man, a solid, substantial man in every way, showing every bit of his forty-five years, and looking just exactly like everything else he was: successful, reliable, dependable, honest and decent.

As he swung down the street, he noticed an old woman who was standing over a grating. She was shifting from one foot to the other, apparently trying to get a little of the heat that was below. Judson looked at her casually, idly, as he passed. He continued on his way for half a square or so, then stopped and glanced back. There she still was, and Judson lost an argument with himself, which was no novelty for him. *Why, the charity organizations take care of such cases,* he said to himself, *but what's the use? Do you think I am going to have my lunch spoiled, thinking of the poor old thing? Is a dollar more to me than my peace of mind?*

These questions were purely rhetorical. He took a dollar from his pocket, and crumpled it. Straight up to her he went. "Here, my girl! Get yourself a little lunch, on me," he said, and put the dollar into her hand.

"The gift without the giver is bare," said the poet Lowell, in a sublime moment; that one could almost be in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Judson read little poetry, however; he was too busy in the machine-tool business.

He turned, and marched away as if he were keeping time to "Mademoiselle from Armentiéres" or "The Stars and Stripes Forever."

Feet pattered behind him, and skinny fingers clutched at his arm. "Mister, Mister," a quavering voice said. It was the old lady, rushing after him to say "God bless you."

"I wasn't begging, Mister," she said.

"Of course not. Of course not."

"I can use that dollar too, Mister. You, you just said to yourself: *That person is in need.* You are a kind man, a good man. . . . Mister, I want to do something for you too."

"Oh, that's quite all right. Don't do a thing. Don't think a thing of it," he said, and would have hurried on, but she would not let him go.

"You go to church? You are a believer?"

"Oh, certainly. Yes, indeed," said Judson, to whom such questions were faintly distasteful.

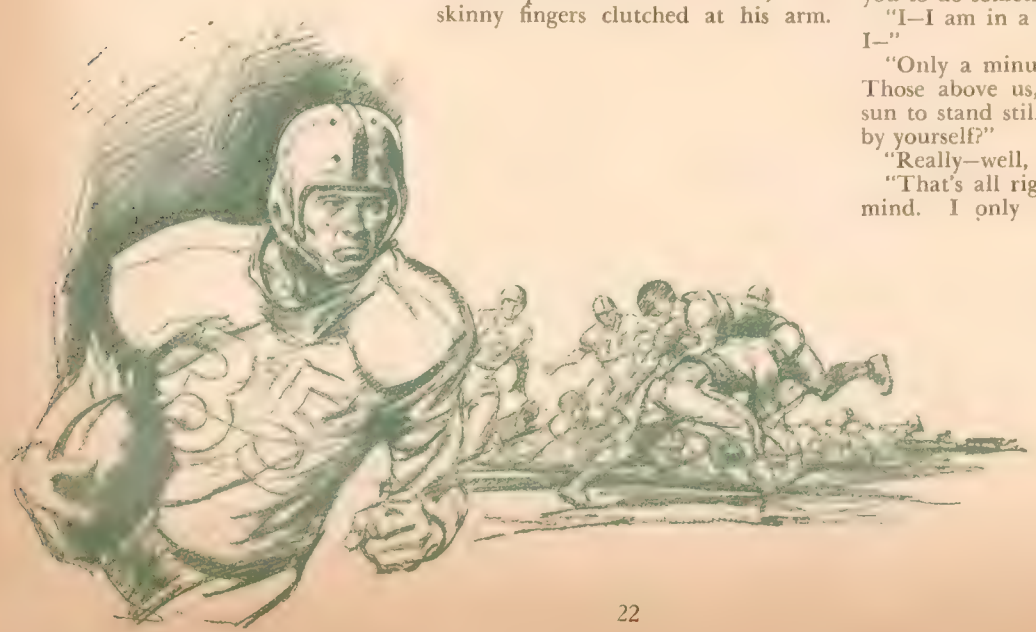
"I am a believer too. I am a very, very old woman. I believe that a kind action gets its reward. Moses, he struck the rock. Joseph, he stood before Pharaoh, the great king, and he was not afraid. David, only a little-bitty boy, went out to fight a giant—yes, and he beat him, too. Because he believed! All of them believed. I do not ask you to believe. I only ask you to do something."

"I—I am in a little bit of a hurry. I—"

"Only a minute. Only a minute! Those above us, they can make the sun to stand still.... You sleep all by yourself?"

"Really—well, well now—"

"That's all right. I can read your mind. I only tell you something:



Illustrated by Orison MacPherson

"Now what?" Judson asked. "Anywhere you want to go. . . . I love this," she said.

Tonight, you go home. You take a bath, you put on all clean, everything clean. You say a little prayer, and then you lie down, and cross your ankles, and make a wish. Maybe it comes true. Maybe it comes true. You, you are beloved by Those above us. 'He it is, that doth go before me.' And it says this: 'I shall lie down; I shall not be afraid. Yea, I shall lie down, and my sleep shall be deep.' You are going to have good luck—great good luck."

This time, it was she who was gone.

JUDSON gazed after her, and shrugged. "That buck will go either into a poorbox or a gin-mill," he said to himself, and grinned; but the back of his neck felt as if a cold hand had passed over it. . . .

He went to his club, and had an excellent lunch. Everything tasted just right to him. When he got back to his office, there was one of the best die-cutters, if one of the most temperamental, in the trade, humbly asking him for a job. Judson was only too glad to hire him. About four o'clock, his star salesman dropped in with a hatful of new orders. And that night Judson lost another of his almost daily battles with his best enemy: himself. *Why,* he said defensively, *I always do take a lukewarm shower; makes you sleep.* As for fresh pajamas—well, wasn't that his custom? He always said a prayer or two, not necessarily at bedtime, but any old time. After all, he asked himself, what harm could it do? That question is still unanswered.

And then Mr. Judson, who had grown up in the hardware business, and could take a micrometer caliper apart, and put it together, only better, lay on his back and crossed his ankles, and made a wish. It was the wish so many of us have: to be young again. To be young, to be strong, to be brave, to love our friends and be loyal and true. "I shall go unto the Altar of God, to God Who rejoiceth my youth." Yes, to be young again, and this time to undo our mistakes, to be a hero, and not cowardly or craven, to be wise, to be just, to be generous and kind. Judson lay there, and had the delicious sensation of knowing he was half asleep, and that soon sleep would come. . . .

There was a long, narrow table, and candles lighted, and men in fantastically embroidered robes, and sweating under the lights.

"Judson is next," one said.

Two men, also in silk robes, escorted Judson, who was blindfolded. "Kneel down," they whispered.

They placed his hand upon a book, and he repeated certain promises, certain vows. . . . "You will take the bandages from the candidate's eyes—I show you now, this badge. The meaning of this badge is—" "I tell you, now, the motto of this Fraternity. It is three Greek words, the meaning of which is—" Then, in unison: "Henceforth we shall not be as strangers—"

"I will keep these vows," said Judson to himself. "And three years from now, I will be the Head of this House, and give these vows to the candidates. Men shall follow men, into this Brotherhood, and my sons shall follow me, yes, and my grandsons, and the University and the Fraternity will be proud of them."

Three years later, Willis Long, Judson's best friend, who is now a Justice of the Circuit Court, was elected Head of that House. The University has never acclaimed any of Judson's sons. He had no children. The University, however, thinks well of Judson. He gave the Endowment Fund a thousand dollars last year.

He has kept his vows, not that he needed any vows. On the other hand, they haven't hurt him a bit, and it would hurt no one to keep these vows, for the things he promised to do were fine and honorable things.

HERE was a wooden bench, a big long bench. Judson was seated on it, in a worn and faded uniform with a number on its back. Some forty thousand people were in the stands. It

was his last game, and his club was a touchdown behind. He had his letter, all right, made it the year before, competently if not brilliantly. All he could do, ever, was to plug up a hole in the line, and relieve a regular. That's all. He had played Freshman ball, and was three years on the squad, but they had used him often enough so that he was able to earn his sweater. It was the fourth quarter. He was dying to get in, just one more time, one more time. Guards have been known to tie a score too, though it is seldom noticed.

"Cornog, Ackerman, Fishman, Ladendorff. Get in there," said the coach. "Clarke, Judson—you two warm up."

Judson was still jogging up and down before the bench when the final whistle blew. The other club made seven points more in the last three minutes. They made it through Judson's part of the line, at that, the left side, where he played when they did put him in.

As they ran off the field, the stands were singing a magnificent hymn, the one they always sing after a beating:

"Thee, when death summons us
Others shall praise."

It was a song that always hit Judson right in the heart.

Back in the showers, somebody said: "Tough luck, Jud."

"Yeah. It was a close one, all right," he said, purposely misunderstanding the comment.

THERE was an eighty-foot cabin cruiser tied up at a landing. Along came Judson, in a blue coat and flannels, and with a pretty little girl in an organdie dress, which might have been better chosen, even for a brief cruise on the river. Soon there were four other couples. Judson knew all of the men, and two of the girls. The other two, so it seemed, weren't distant.

Having a drink at eleven in the morning is scarcely in the best of the old tradition, but they disregarded that. They all had a drink, all of them except the girl Judson had brought along—Elaine, her name was. She didn't smoke, either. The language of the two new girls was casual, if not careless. No doubt they were as harmless as kittens, but they seemed to be trying to sound like baby anacondas, and to an extent they were succeeding.

As for Elaine, they would have described her as a wet smack, a drip, a heavy muffin, or Aunt Tillie, never knowing that one day their wit and their ways would be remembered with a yawn. Judson wasn't particularly shocked by them, but he wasn't entranced, either. He had the right girl on the wrong party, and he knew it. Claire's frequent and easy use of names and places discussed at some length in the Old and New Testaments disturbed him somewhat, and Mavis was displaying an eagerness for liquor which he considered ostentatious, and perhaps spurious. In fact, Judson was bored out of all expression—a mood, by the way, which explains many a romance when nothing else will. Seizing a chance, he spoke quietly to Elaine: "What do you say? I don't like this party so much, either. Maybe you aren't feeling so good, huh? . . . No, no, I tell you what: I am going to get sick. Not really sick, you understand. But I'll ask them to put us off at Newtown—that's just a little ways. We can get a bus to Atlantic. We get something to eat, maybe go to a movie. What do you say?"

"Jud, you're wonderful," she said, and her eyes were like stars.

Soon they were waving a gay farewell to the mariners. There was a last small innuendo from Mavis as a benediction. For all her prudishness, Elaine did not blush, but made her own gallant gesture of defiance: she reached out and took Judson's left hand, and held it until the boat was out of sight.

"Now what?" Judson asked.

"Anywhere you want to go. . . . Where did you ever meet those people?"

Considering that one of them was a fraternity brother, and that he had played against another in the Cornell game during his good year, Judson's reply was temperate, if not mendacious. "Just picked them up," he said. "We find out where we get that bus, huh?"

"I love this," she said, and gave his arm a quick squeeze. Soon, or it seemed soon, they were walking along the Boardwalk, looking at the shops. In a window was a little garnet pin, on a tray with a thousand other trinkets. "That's sort of cute," she said.

Wow, said Young Lochinvar, or perhaps it was Sir Launfal. Ah, she is only a child. She's had a rotten day. Might as well give her a good time. "Come on," he said, and strode into the shop.

The pin cost a dollar, no tax. She pinned it on, with shaking fingers. "Now I'll always have something to remember you by," she said.

ONLY a child? A mere baby? Why, at five years old, already they know their stuff. Wait till you have a granddaughter. You'll learn plenty.

Just a simple, unspoiled kid, thought Judson, feeling indeed that he was as one who has wallowed in the miry clay. To a dispassionate observer, this would seem to have been most unlikely. Well, he'd give her a good time, a swell time. After all, it was only for the evening. Later on, he said, likewise only to himself: *Why, she is a good kid, an all right gal. I won't drop her, at least not right away. I'll give her a buzz, once in a while. It wouldn't hurt me to go around with her, now and then.*

Good-by, Sir Launfal. Good-by, Sir Lancelot. Good-by, Judson, old boy, old boy. We'll be seeing you.

JUDSON awoke with a start, and in a perspiration. There was an old woman, he was thinking, and she gave me a wish. A wish—good heaven, I got my wish: To be young, to be young again, to be so stupid, so conceited, so patronizing. To be so foolish, thinking yourself shrewd and wise. To be foolhardy, thinking yourself brave. To be cruel, imagining you are a man of the world. Me—me, with the wife I've got, the fine upstanding woman, the good sport, the square-shooting kid. Coming to me in tears, telling me she couldn't have any children. But I fixed that. I fixed that, all right. I just said: "What are you bawling about, you idiot? Why, Doc Terry told me that, months and months ago. Maybe it's just as well. That's nothing, nothing at all, kid. Shed a few tears about the machine-tool business—it's terrible."

He got up, reached for a bathrobe, and made his way down the hall. He opened a door noiselessly as he could, which is faint praise. His wife turned drowsily and smiled. "Hello, Jud," she said. "Give me a cigarette, will you, hon?"

"Sure thing," he said, and lighted the lamp at her dressing-table, putting his bulk between her and the sudden glare. There weren't any cigarettes.

"Look in the drawer, Jud. I think there are some in there."

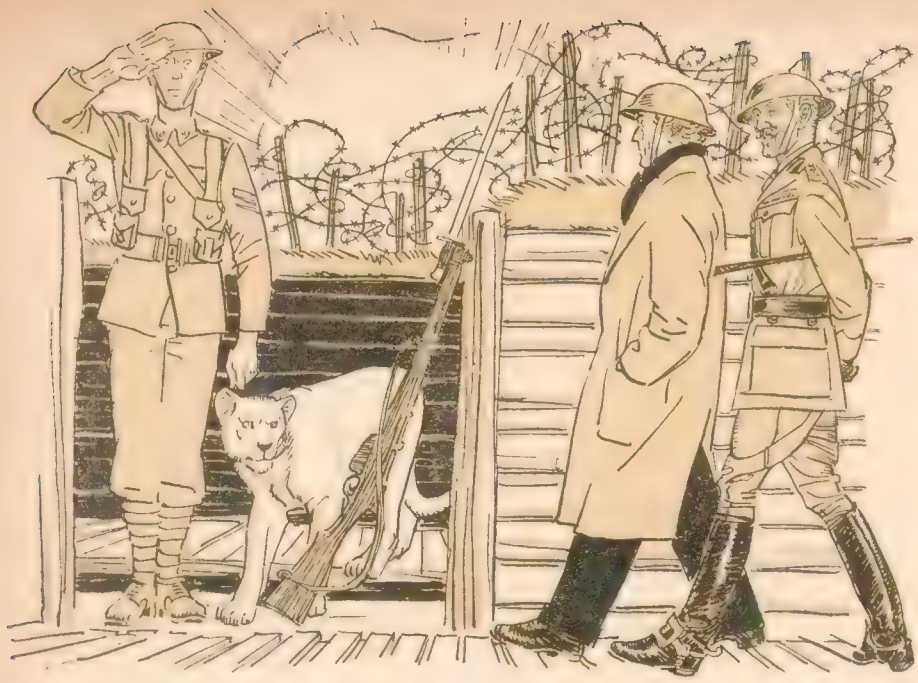
There was about everything else in the drawer. If his wife's handbag was a welter, her dresser drawer was a shambles. He turned over this and that, and found, naturally, no cigarettes, but something else: a little garnet pin, that had cost a dollar in a shop on the Boardwalk, and which he had given to her, some twenty-odd years ago.

"I'll get you a cigarette," he said. "Say, Elaine: I don't think I ever told you this. I fell in love with you, the first moment I ever saw you."

"Boy, have you got a line!" she said. "With your line, you could get any woman in the world."

"I wouldn't be surprised," he said. "I wouldn't be surprised."

That old woman, and her wish? Why, a man like him, wanting to recover his youth? Don't be silly. He had never lost it.



Military Mascots III

Poilu

World War I Mascot
of British 19th Division

by
FAIRFAX DOWNEY

SINCE a butterfly was the insignia of the Nineteenth British Division in the First World War, French allies christened it *La Division Papillon*. However, such an emblem, while decorative, seemed rather delicate for that battle-toughened organization. Decidedly some more martial creature was needed to represent the Nineteenth.

Its commander, General Tom Bridges, found the answer while on leave in Paris in 1916. A friend gave him a couple of lion cubs, won in a Red Cross raffle. The female was shipped to the London zoo, but her brother, comfortably ensconced in a champagne hamper, accompanied General Bridges back to the front. Now the Nineteenth rejoiced in the most appropriate of all mascots—a small replica of the lion which with the unicorn upholds the coat-of-arms of Great Britain.

Bridges named the cub, which had been born in France, Poilu—the hairy one—after the typical bearded French soldier. An amiable little beast that never lost his temper, Poilu followed his master about like a dog with never the sign of a leash. Though he frightened civilians, made transport mules nervous and forced cooks to lock up meat against his foraging, the lion was a great favorite with the troops. As soon as he was old enough, they boasted, he would go over the top with them and chew up some Germans.

When the Division moved, Poilu rode in a special cage in a lorry which also carried his portable quarters and wire-netting run. Frequently he was freed for walks up to the front-line trenches, where soldier friends welcomed him. He stood bombardments like a veteran but always jumped if a motor vehicle rumbled up behind him on a road—a wise precaution for man or beast.

The fame of the Nineteenth's mascot spread through the sector and drew envy and admiration except at Corps Headquarters, where a live lion at the front was frowned upon. "Most irregular!" snorted the Adjutant General, and passed word that Poilu was to be sent away. "Come and take him," replied Bridges, a fighting general who won battles and was not given to truckling to top brass. Since the idea of picking up a growing lion, which might not be cooperative, appealed not a bit to Headquarters, Poilu stayed.

He was present when the Nineteenth recaptured a salient, blown up by the Germans, and it was named "The Lion's Mouth" in his honor. At large as usual, he was wandering about when a distinguished visitor from England arrived to call on General Bridges.

Prime Minister Asquith, on his way to the Division command post near Loos, met Poilu face-to-face. Without any remark the dignified gentleman passed on and made his call, but as he was leaving he inquired of his host with truly British diffidence: "I may be wrong, but did I see a lion in the path?"

Highest authority made no objection, and Poilu might have finished out the war with the Nineteenth, if General Bridges had not been severely wounded in September, 1917, and compelled to turn over his command. The new commanding officer declared there was trouble enough without a lion around, so Bridges' aide-de-camp was assigned to escort Poilu to England.

Aides are versatile young officers, accustomed to tasks ranging from carrying messages under fire to dancing with dowagers, but the journey ordered with Poilu proved to be a formidable detail. Aboard ship in a Channel storm, the lion broke out of his crate and treed the crew and passengers on the bridge and in the rigging. At length he was persuaded by his aide-keeper to enter and occupy a cabin for the rest of the crossing.

The problem of a home for Poilu was solved when he was accepted by Sir Garrand Tyrwhitt-Drake, zoölogist and collector of animals. That expert made one initial mistake—he turned his charge over to a lady lion-tamer. Poilu, a man's lion, was first indignant, then hostile. He bit the lady in, as Sir Garrand put it, "a fleshy part which caused sitting to be uncomfortable."

Feminine interference disposed of, Poilu calmly allowed Sir Garrand in his cage and made friends. He was given a Great Dane as companion, and got on well with him until the dog took to bullying him and stealing his food. Even this Poilu equably endured, and the Dane was removed intact.

Acclaimed by his new master as the most famous of hundreds of lions he had owned, Poilu grew into a great tawny beast with a fine black mane. Mated, he sired several litters of cubs. In 1935, benign and mellow to the last, he died of old age.

THE AUTHOR OF "CONQUEROR'S ISLE" AND "THE MAGIC STAIRCASE" EVOKES ANOTHER DIMENSION IN TIME—AND THUS ACHIEVES A STARTLING FANTASY.

The World of

by NELSON BOND

LET me begin with an apology. Since I am a medical doctor, and my previous literary efforts have been limited to recountals of case histories couched in the technical language of my profession, this will be no smooth and polished narrative.

However, that matters little. Save for occasional paragraphs in which I have attempted to describe and interpret the progressive decline of my patient, the bulk of that which you are about to read is not my own writing, but is composed of excerpts from the diary of the late Doctor William Gresham.

Dr. Gresham (whose degree was not in medicine, but in the field of advanced physics) was admitted to St. Barnaby's on the tenth day of April last. His attitude toward his commitment was unlike that of the average patient. He neither protested his hospitalization nor did he—as do many—appear to welcome the quiet sanctuary of a therapeutic refuge. From the start of his confinement to the day of its inexplicable ending, his conduct can best be described by the statement that he did not seem to care. He simply did not seem to care.

By this I do not mean to imply that Gresham was in a state of such mental confusion that he did not know where he was or what he was doing. To the end, he was completely aware of his surroundings. He always maintained a pleasant and coöperative relationship with the members of our hospital staff. He answered all questions frankly, affably, clearly, and with frequent evidences of that keen wit for which he was noted during his teaching career. He took in his stride such tests as were given him, achieving scores which, as a psychologist, I am reluctantly compelled to consider inconclusive in his case, since without exception they indicated him to be well above the norm in perception and lucidity, and—where intellectual capacity was concerned—with equal invariability rated him in the genius class.

Still, as will shortly become apparent to readers of this history, there was some curious twist in the mind of William Gresham: an aberrant factor not detectable by any testing methods presently known to psychiatry. Either that, or—

But I will not hypothesize. I greatly prefer to let Gresham's diary tell its own amazing story. So, without further comment, I offer the first significant selection, an entry written several weeks before Dr. William Gresham entered St. Barnaby's Mental Hospital for observation and subsequent committal.

March 3rd

IT has come at last: the war we loathed and dreaded but more than half expected; the all-out conflict which for so long a time we have so futilely striven to avoid.

A few minutes ago all network programs were interrupted in order that over the nation's combined radio facilities might simultaneously be brought to the American people a message of great importance. Moments later, listeners heard and television viewers saw the President of the United States speaking from a studio somewhere in the nation's capital.

He wasted no time in coming to the point. Quietly, gravely, in a voice weighted with the heavy responsibility now come to rest upon his already overburdened shoulders, he delivered his fateful message.

"My friends and fellow-countrymen: As your President, it is my sad duty to inform you that our nation is involved in a state of active war.

"A little less than one hour ago, armed forces of the Soviet powers, without prior declaration or warning, committed a coördinated series of unprovoked naval and aërial attacks upon United Nations military installations in Japan, Formosa and the Philippine Islands. The results of these actions are as yet uncertain, but retaliative measures already have been launched.

"As Commander-in-Chief of our armed forces, I have instructed our military leaders in the combat zone to strike back at our aggressors immediately with every means at their disposal—including our heaviest and most deadly weapons of latest design.

"I call upon all Americans for their utmost support in this emergency. We did not want this war, but now we are in it, we will meet the enemy's challenge with strength, with courage and with fortitude. The rights of free men everywhere must be preserved, and with God's help we will emerge victorious from this conflict."

So spoke the President. There has not yet come any further battle news, or enlightenment as to what he meant when he spoke of "our heaviest and most deadly weapons of latest design." But I think I know; I fear I know only too well. And because I have more reason than most men to realize the dreadful potentialities of the weapons he referred to, today I am steeped in despair. What lies ahead, I dare not consider. Like everyone else, I can only hope for the best. But I await future developments with foreboding.

War has begun. The President's message marked the end of the beginning. Or was it the beginning of the end?

March 4th

THIS morning the seismograph shook—shook with unprecedented violence. So sudden and so rude were the tremors recorded that at our observatory the pen was forcibly driven from the drum. Thus, for the present at least, we cannot determine the shock area with any degree of accuracy. We must wait for correlating reports from other stations.

This could mean that in some distant corner of the globe a giant meteor—one greater than that which centuries ago created Arizona's famed crater—has crashed to earth in a blaze of fury. It could mean, elsewise, that somewhere a slumbering volcano has exploded, destroying thousands in its fiery blast, perhaps deluging entire cities beneath rivers of searing lava.

Political leaders live—if at all—in peril of their lives. A stricken people seem bitterly determined to wreak vengeance on those who wrought their destruction.

William Gresham

Illustrated by BRENDAN LYNCH

I only hope it *is* so minor a disaster. . . .

March 5th

Harbin!

Harbin, rail center of Soviet Manchuria, is the site of the instrument-recorded shock. But the earthquake was not natural: it was man-made. The War Department has just issued a communique, which says in part:

"SHUNA reports the total destruction of the troop-dispersement center and supply-depot city of Harbin as a result of yesterday's air raid. A single bomb of improved nuclear-fission type was employed. Complete elimination of the target is claimed."

A single bomb! Supreme Headquarters of the United Nations forces in Asia does not say *what* element was cleft to create so mighty an explosion. But I know. It could not have been uranium or plutonium. It must have been the recently perfected hydrogen bomb. Only *it* could have erased so great a city in so short a time; only *it* could have caused the seismograph pens to dance as erratically as they did.

The dance of death. Will any of us escape its fatal music?

March 6th

Silence out of Harbin. Elsewhere the Soviet press and radio scream outraged accusations and threats of reprisal. But no word issues from the stricken city itself.

March 7th

No word out of Harbin. Four of our reconnaissance planes were shot down as they attempted to cross the Manchurian border. We have been unable to approach the bombed city to obtain photographic evidence of the damage done there. So we are forced to depend on enemy communiqués for information, and save for vituperative streams of abuse, the Soviet radio is curiously reserved. The Vladivostok station, previously a noisy, round-the-clock disseminator of Communist propaganda, abruptly and inexplicably went off the air early this morning, though oddly enough, no raids were reported in the area.

March 8th

SHUNA Intelligence estimates the Harbin population at the time of atom-bombing to have been between one million and 1,500,000, claiming the normal civilian population of five hundred thousand to have been augmented at that time by almost twice that many troops in transit.

The Soviet powers neither deny this nor confirm it. There is still no word out of Harbin. Nor, disturbingly, out of the surrounding area. Our ground forces in Korea report unusual troop movements in the northern part of the peninsula. Great numbers of the enemy are pouring southward. But not in military formation. They seem to be advancing in mass without either arms or supplies.

March 9th

The war has taken a mad, unpredictable turn. Today Soviet planes struck again at Japan and the Philippines, and naval units bombarded Formosa with unrelenting vigor. But at the battle-front in Korea, where the enemy is known to have maintained his greatest single concentration of ground forces, our army has won a tremendous victory without firing a shot!

All day long, vast hordes of Communists have been streaming across the border in a wild, disorganized rout. By truck, tank, jeep and motorcycle came the first swarms. The foot soldiers followed as best they could. Panic was the keynote of their flight. They approached our bastions unarmed, having left their heavy equipment and weapons on the road behind them, that they might travel the faster. Their only display of opposition was when our men tried to herd them into concentration camps. Even then, they did not *fight*. Rather, they stampeded —indifferent to bullets and barbed-wire alike—and continued their southward movement.

Prisoners are being held for interrogation, and before long we may learn the reason behind this puzzling mass flight. So far, no word has been received from SHUNA. There is a growing suspicion in my mind. I wonder if—

But that's impossible!

Or—is it?

March 10th

SHUNA has lowered a curtain of rigid censorship over the Korea sector. We are not told why. But I am beginning to fear my supposition is correct. Now, if United Nations troops are ordered to evacuate the peninsula. . . .

March 11th

Washington has just announced that our armed forces *are* withdrawing from Korea. Then I was right. It *is* a chain. But in what measure? To what degree? If mild, there may yet be some hope. But if extreme—God help us all!

The preceding excerpts cover a period of slightly more than a week. Gresham's entries, if somewhat emotional, are concise, lucid, almost documentary. Only—

Well, already the reader will have recognized that this diary records events of a history that never transpired. Gresham's week is from a calendar that never was.

Vast hordes have been streaming

The diary—into which we now dip at intervals for additional notations—becomes increasingly fantastic as the days pass by. Apparently Gresham's imaginative powers rise to dizzier heights as his aberration deepens.

March 18th

No armistice, as such, has been officially declared, but fighting in all sectors has come to an end. Today, elements of the Soviet navy combined with those of the United Nations fleet

across the border in a wild rout. They did not fight; they stampeded—indifferent to bullets and barbed-wire alike.

to effect the evacuation of Hokkaido, without a single incident of belligerent nature being reported.

There is further information from Moscow. Russian physicists estimate the expansion rate to be approximately fifty miles per day. This is very close to the figure *I* computed on the basis of press reports of the past week.

Fifty miles per day! That is 350 a week, 1500 per month. At that rate—

March 24th

All of Japan is gone, and the China mainland south as far as Shanghai. A few refugees have straggled in from vanished Peiping. Their reports are identical with those we received earlier: first the heat, then the liquefaction, and finally the dissolution.

Our reconnaissance planes offer no encouragement. Sea water does not slow the scourge, as we had vainly hoped. The Yellow Sea is gone; so is the Sea of Japan. The dwindling tides of the East China Sea bubble and seethe with boiling heat; waves of scalding water sweep the coasts, and the air is nauseous with the stench of dead marine animals.

April 3rd

The scourge has devoured Formosa, and our garrison on Luzon is fleeing to Australia.

China has been swallowed as far west as Chungking. Russia reports the crescent has extended to Kolymsk in the north and Kamchatka in the east.

Famine and disease are now taking an increasing toll of lives in Asia. More than forty million refugees have crammed their way into Indo-China, where they are ravaging the land like locusts.

April 9th

The Westerling Experiment has failed. I feared it would. You can combat fire with fire, but that which we are fighting is more than fire; it is the very living essence of destruction. Westerling's idea of encircling the omnivorous circle with a neutralized zone might possibly have worked a month ago, but it is too late now. Our last remaining hope is that the scourge may eat itself out of existence. But it is an unreasonable hope, contrary to the basic laws of physics.

Strange is public reaction to this crisis. People look at me oddly when I tell them mankind is doomed. Why, I do not know. I think they all must be half crazed with fear. Indeed, many to whom I speak act as if they don't even *know* what is happening, and—worse yet—what *will* happen.

My own family has succumbed to this universal mania, this living lie, this ostrich policy of pretending that by refusing to view the facts they may avert the consequences. They assure me I am mistaken, that there is nothing to fear. They advise me to consult a doctor; they insist that I go to a psychiatric clinic for observation.

Well, and why not? There is no reason to quarrel. With months, perhaps only weeks, remaining to us, one place is as good as another. There is no hiding-place from final judgment. If it gives them consolation to delude themselves with the notion that *I* am mentally unstable—

On April 10th, Dr. William Gresham was committed to the care of St. Barnaby's Hospital by his family. Thus he became one of my charges.

He was, as I have said, a model patient. Paranoid schizophrenics are rarely troublesome, and they are not prone to sudden homicidal furies, as are manic-depressives. Save when their pet obsessions are challenged, they appear to be quite lucid and rational.

So with Gresham. His conversation varied from normality only when he discussed world events. My casebook records the following typical conversation between him and myself on April 29th.

(Apologetically I may mention here—having not previously done so—that I am Dr. Thomas Preston, psychiatrist.)

PRESTON: Good morning, Dr. Gresham. How are you feeling today?

GRESHAM: Fine, thank you.

PRESTON: Enjoy your breakfast?

GRESHAM: Very much.

PRESTON: I trust you slept well last night?

GRESHAM: *(Wryly)* As well as can be expected—under the circumstances.

PRESTON: Circumstances?

GRESHAM: Oh, Lord! Not *you* too?

PRESTON: I'm afraid I don't understand.

GRESHAM: My dear boy, don't you see it's no use? You can't escape the truth by closing your eyes to it.

PRESTON: Which truth are you referring to, Doctor?

GRESHAM: *(Impatiently)* The only truth that matters any more. The fact that we are doomed. Surely you heard the radio last night?

(Note: Radio programs of the preceding evening were those regularly scheduled by the networks. There was no such special broadcast as that described by the patient.)

PRESTON: Why, yes. As a matter of fact, I did.

GRESHAM: The special broadcast from Sitka?

PRESTON: Sitka, Alaska? On which network?

GRESHAM: Which network? *All* the networks! Didn't you hear what they said? Nome—gone! The Aleutians—gone! The Bering Sea swallowed in that damned insatiable maw. And *you* refuse to acknowledge anything has happened!

PRESTON: Just *what* did you hear on the radio last night, Dr. Gresham? Apparently I missed the broadcast you're referring to.

GRESHAM: *(Wearily)* What does it matter? Listen tonight, and you'll hear more of the same thing. Day by day it comes closer at that constant, creeping rate; unvarying, inexorable. Fifty miles a day. Its radius is twenty-seven hundred miles now. In another month it will reach California. In one more—

PRESTON: *What* comes closer, Doctor? I don't—

GRESHAM: *(Petulantly)* Death, you young imbecile! What's the matter with all you people, anyway? Have you gone completely mad? Or are you just too cowardly to face facts, to confront the horror that lies before us?

PRESTON: Now, Dr. Gresham—please don't get excited. I'll give you a sedative—

GRESHAM: Let me alone, confound you! I don't need a sedative. All I want is peace—quiet—forgetfulness.

PRESTON: Of course. I'll leave now, if you wish. I'm very sorry that I upset you.

GRESHAM: No; don't go. *I'm* the one who should apologize. I didn't mean to be rude, Doctor. But I *am* upset. It's my fault, you know. Or partly, that is. We started all this—my colleagues and I.

PRESTON: Oh?

GRESHAM: Yes. We should have refused. We knew it was dangerous. But we thought we were being good patriots—

PRESTON: When you did *what*, Doctor?

GRESHAM: Our research. The Manhattan project, and the later, more advanced studies. We provided the scientific knowledge with which they created Juggernaut. But we didn't know what we were doing, Preston. We guessed there was danger; yes. But this is much worse than anything we expected. We feared a sudden flame, a swift and devastating reaction of the gaseous elements, in which earth might be consumed in an instant of blazing fury. We strove to avoid that—and succeeded. But *this*—

PRESTON: You're talking, now, about your work for the Government on nuclear-fission weapons?

GRESHAM: *(Nods)* Yes—God help me! But we didn't expect this. We never dreamed the chain reaction would spread like a cancerous blight from atom to atom, in a widening circle devouring everything it touched: the land, the sea, the world, and all mankind.

PRESTON: Then *that* is what you think is happening?

GRESHAM: Think? That's what I *know* is happening! Why do you all conspire to pretend there is nothing wrong?

PRESTON: Dr. Gresham—suppose I were to tell you there *is* nothing wrong? That all your fears are but figments of your imagination?

GRESHAM: *(Slowly)* Then I would say that everyone on earth but me has gone stark, staring mad with panic fear. Can I not trust the witness of my own eyes and ears?

PRESTON: Not always, Doctor. Hallucination can be very real. Sometimes—

GRESHAM: Hallucin—! Oh, get out!

PRESTON: But, Dr. Gresham—

GRESHAM: Get out! *Out*, I say!

(Note: At this point I withdrew, rather than cause the patient any additional emotional disturbance.)

Now you begin to understand the curious delusion of Dr. William Gresham. The preceding conversation was of great assistance to us in diagnosing his mental ailment; it was less helpful in suggesting a treatment. Since his family would not permit E.S.T. or insulin shock, the case progressively drifted toward deeper dissociation with reality. As witness the following diary excerpts:

May 4th

Today is a grisly anniversary of sorts. Two short months ago a single hydrogen bomb—the combined World Government news bureau has long since admitted it *was* that—dropped on the city of Harbin. Since that fateful day, one sixth of earth's land area has been eaten away into frightful nothingness by the chain reaction that one bomb unleashed.

Where China used to be is now a pulsating blot of all-devouring radiation, a festering sore upon the corpse of earth. Thailand is gone, and most of what was proud Russia. Kure and Midway Islands went last night. Far in the north the plague has touched the pole.

There is no longer any way of estimating the dead. Some say three hundred million; others place the figure twice that high. Europe is overrun with frenzied refugees clawing their way into cities that do not want and cannot feed them, wild-eyed and desperate humans vainly struggling to escape certain death for another month, another week, or even for a day, an hour.

Madness! There is no escape; there is only delay. Man has built mankind's pyre with his learning. . . .

June 2nd

Northern Australia. Saudi Arabia. Berlin, Germany—and Vancouver Island on our own continent.

June 12th

One hundred days. London died stubbornly, Paris with Gallic grace. The States of Washington and Oregon have slipped into the abyss. San Francisco must fall tomorrow or the next day.

There is indescribable confusion everywhere. Some men have turned to God in their extremity; others have chosen to go down rioting in the madness of a last frenetic orgy. Which way is better is not mine to say. Perhaps it does not really matter.

But as the end approaches, all men have turned violently against those whose leadership brought Armageddon upon them. Here and abroad—what remains of abroad! — political leaders and military chieftains live, if at all, in peril of their lives. A stricken people, now convinced of their impending doom, seem bitterly determined to wreak final vengeance on those who wrought their destruction.

Dog eat dog. But to what purpose? The days remaining are too few to be important.

June 15th

It is selfish, I suppose, to think only of my own land and people in this world-wide cataclysm. But after all, I am an American. The death of thousands here means more to me than that of millions elsewhere. Besides, the channels of communication with the rest of the yet unravaged world have been well-nigh destroyed. Only South America and the southern tip of Africa remain untouched by the scourge.

Here in America the encroaching arc creeps steadily eastward. The names of the fallen cities are like a toll for their dead. Butte, Boise, Reno, Fresno. . . .

"Chicago went off the air yesterday. I heard their last broadcast. Poor devils!"

June 17th

Again I have computed the time remaining to us. It is always the same. Seven hundred and fifty miles—fifteen days. Two weeks! Grim answer to a once popular parlor game query: What would you do if you knew you had but two weeks to live?

I know, now, what I would do. *Will* do. I will go on as ever, eating and drinking, sleeping, reading, talking, striving to ignore the end until it comes.

I am glad I came to St. Barnaby's. Somehow this refuge has escaped the madness that has gripped the world outside. Here, somehow, they maintain the blissful pretense that beyond these four walls nothing is happening. If any of them are frightened, they conceal it well.

But wait! Perhaps the *sane* warders have long since fled, and all my companions here—even those pretending to be doctors — are really fellow-inmates? It is a reasonable answer to an otherwise inexplicable situation.

THE reader must understand that these pages from Dr. Gresham's diary did not become available to our inspection until after his demise. Thus, at the time of their writing, we had no way of knowing his obsession was coming so close to its conclusion, else we might have tried to do *something* to ease his mind of its harassing fears —though what, I do not know.

My final conversation with Dr. Gresham was held on the first day of July.

My visit to his room was routine, but I spent more time with him than usual, because of his unusual nervousness. This I tried to assuage, I fear not too successfully.

"You seem rather fretful today, Dr. Gresham," I said. "Quite unlike yourself."

"That surprises you?" he asked somewhat acidly.

"In your case, yes. Is there anything I can get to make you more at ease? A book, perhaps?"

He stared at me with a curious expression, strangely combining admiration and wonder.

"You *are* a cool one, Preston," he declared. "I'm sure I don't understand you at all. But I admire you. Envy you, too! You're really *not* frightened?"

"Frightened?"

"At what is going to happen tonight?"

I said: "Perhaps if you would explain—"

"Why? You know as much as I do—maybe more. Tell me—what of the city outside? Is there rioting here, as elsewhere?"

"Everything is normal outside," I assured him. "It is a beautiful day. A trifle warm, perhaps—"

"Warm?" His eyes narrowed. "*How* warm? Perhaps it is coming sooner than I estimated."

"Summer, you mean? Dr. Gresham, tell me something—frankly, please. Have you lost track of time since you came here? Do you remember the day, the month, the year?"

"Of course, Preston. I keep a diary."

"Then tell me," I persisted, "what day is it? What year?"

I HAD some hope of getting a response that would aid me in solving his case. Schizophrenics are frequently "off their time track," so to speak. That is to say, their minds are ensnared in a period of time remote from that which their physical bodies inhabit.

But Gresham only frowned at me impatiently.

"Don't be absurd, Doctor. Time is not important. Time is the measure of duration. Physical things are touched by duration; the mind is not. If it is of any interest to you, please accept my assurance that I *do* know these facts quite well. *Too* well. I know we have less than twenty hours left, and that these hours are slipping away, minute by speeding minute."

I shrugged and prepared to leave. As I reached the doorway, I paused and snapped on the small radio Gresham's family had installed in the room for his entertainment. The sound of laughter issued from the speaker. I recognized the show as one of those audience-participation breakfast clubs originating from the Middle West.

I said: "Would you like to hear this, Doctor? It's rather amusing sometimes."

He turned blank eyes upon me. "Eh? Hear what?"

"This show from Chicago."

"Chicago!" He looked at me pityingly. "There is no Chicago any more. Chicago went off the air yesterday. I heard their last broadcast. Poor devils!"

"But this *is* Chicago, Dr. Gresham—the program you hear now. This music, this laughter—"

He stared at me, at the radio, then at me again.

"You mean," he said gently, "you actually think you hear music and laughter from that silent box?"

"But of course! Don't you?"

"Then my guess was right," he whispered. "You *are* one of them."

Then he laughed. It was not good laughter. It had in it the biting edge of hysteria.

"This is the cream!" he cried. "The very cream of the jest. But never mind, *Doctor*—" He stressed the title sardonically. "Play your rôle while you can. Snatch what pleasure you can from mankind's waning hours. Sanity and insanity—they are all one now."

I thought it best to withdraw. I said: "Well, I'll be going now, Dr. Gresham. But I'll see you again tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? You think so?"

"Of course. I'll be in to see you in the morning."

"But—" He seemed about to say something. Then he changed his mind, clamping his lips tightly. After a moment he spoke softly, almost kindly.

"Yes, my boy. As you wish. Good-by."

"Good day, Dr. Gresham."

"No," he said. "Not good day. Good-by."

He spoke with an incomprehensible finality. At the time, I didn't understand. I left, baffled. Understanding did not come to me until the morning of the following day. I realized, then, that Dr. Gresham had not spoken meaninglessly. He had been bidding me a last farewell.

ON the night of July 1st there was a brief, and unprecedented, disturbance in that wing of the hospital in which Dr. Gresham's room was located. The attendant on duty made a check of the corridor, but found nothing amiss. The outcries ceased shortly after they began, and it could not be determined from which room they had originated.

So it is only *assumption* on my part that these cries were the last vocal utterances of Dr. William Gresham. But I feel it is a reasonable assumption. In consideration of what we found the next morning—and of the final diary entry—

July 1st

I am sorry, now, my window faces west. It might be better if I could not *see* it coming. But see it I do. It is midnight, or almost, but the sky is a sullen red; by the ugly glow of the blight I can see the city's skyline as at dusk.

Weird sight, terrifying, yet fascinating. A *melting* skyline! One moment a skyscraper points its concrete finger to the heavens, a seeming stanch, eternal symbol of mankind's mastery over the elements. The next, it wavers and trembles, sheathed in an *outré* luminescence. Then it is gone—additional fodder to the boundless appetite of element-hungry atoms.

I have an hour, perhaps, or half that long. Why I continue to write, I cannot say, for these poor foolish lines I scrawl on paper will soon be one with myself in the churning maelstrom of destruction.

Strangely enough, I am not— Ah! Great clouds of steam! That would be the Hudson? Then there is less time than I thought!

Later

Here is a curious thing: the radio is still on! I am amazed to find that some men are so brave, but I am also proud. The announcer has just said that the broadcast will continue "as long as possible"—I know what he means, as do his handful of listeners. I suppose there is a consolation of sorts in it for him. Since he must go anyway, it is some sort of honor to report the death of man's greatest city.

Those who could buy or fight their way elsewhere are gone. It appears that Argentina may be the last place to go. So those who could do so have fled there. Vainly, of course. They have won, at most, another month of respite.

Later

One thing continues to puzzle me. Since the plague eats in a great surface circle, why does it not also devour inward, boring a concave tunnel to the bowels of the earth?

This *should* be so, but obviously is not. Else long ago the central magma would have been tapped, splitting earth into fragments with its fiery convulsions, flooding the surface with billions of tons of molten death.

Why did I overlook this fact before? Have I been a fool? Perhaps there is a faint hope for the salvation of mankind in caverns deep beneath the face of earth. I hope some savant wiser than myself has thought of this, has taken refuge in such a place.

Later

It has reached Central Park. In minutes, now, the stone ramparts of Rockefeller Center will slip away—

Yes, there they go! And the radio goes with them.

Later

It is growing uncomfortably hot. The glow is dull no longer, but bright, bright, *bright*. There is an incessant

2 one-year subscriptions to BLUE BOOK for $4

Extra one-year subscriptions $2 each when the same person orders more than two

RATES FOR SINGLE SUBSCRIPTIONS • 1 YEAR $2.50 • 2 YEARS $4

Above prices effective in U.S.A., Canada and Pan-American countries. In other countries, add $1 per year. In Canada, remit to Blue Book, 635 Queen St. E., Toronto 8, Ontario

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE
McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio

AW 47

Enclosed please find $.....in payment for.....subscriptions for Blue Book as checked below to go to the following addresses:

Mr.
Name .....

Local
Address .....

City &
State .....

☐ 1 Year ☐ 2 Years ☐ New ☐ Renewal

Friend's
Name.....

Local
Address.....

City &
State .....

☐ 1 Year ☐ 2 Years ☐ New ☐ Renewal

Friend's
Name.....

Local
Address.....

City &
State .....

☐ 1 Year ☐ 2 Years ☐ New ☐ Renewal

Friend's
Name.....

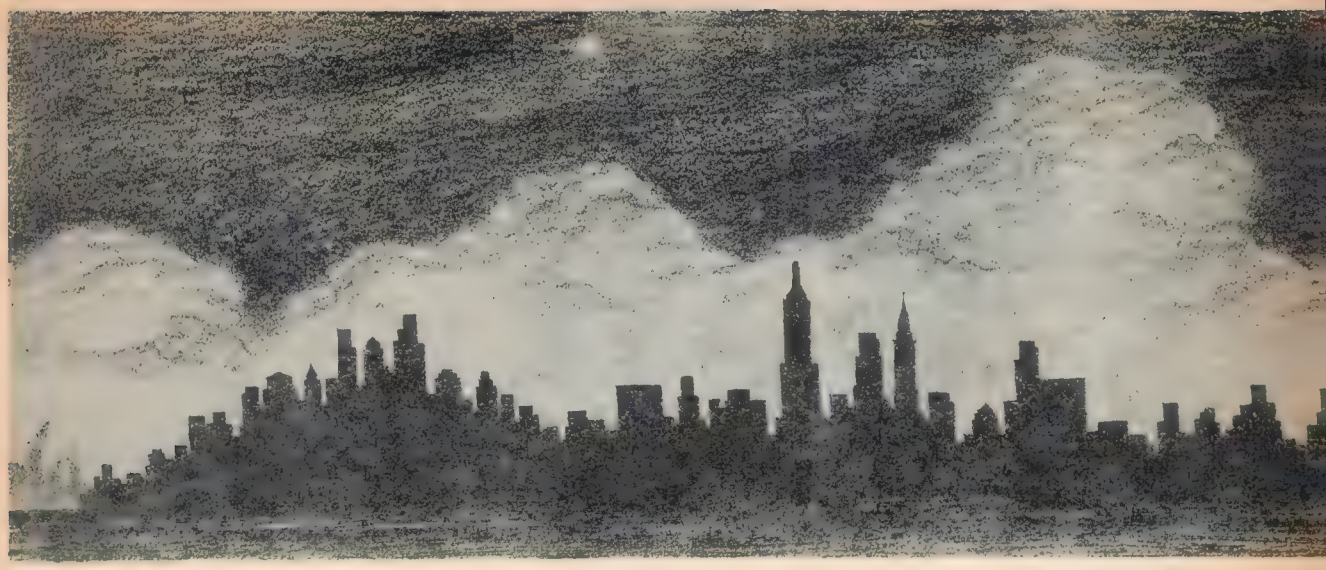
Local
Address.....

City &
State .....

☐ 1 Year ☐ 2 Years ☐ New ☐ Renewal

Please include postal zone numbers, if any.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.



Weird sight—a melting skyline! One moment a skyscraper points to the heavens; the next, it wavers. Then it is gone.

sound in the air. I cannot describe it. It is a sort of humming, or buzzing—is it electrical? The sound of death!

Later

Two rows of buildings before me. Two rows, no more. The heat becomes unbearable. I have taken off my clothes. I cannot look out the window for more than seconds at a time or the dancing radiation sears my eyes.

The row of buildings closest has begun to shimmer. . . .

A man just darted past my window. He was running toward the flame, not away from it. The best way—

That was what? A shock? A tremor of *this* building?

I must get out of here! I was wrong. The moments *are* worth fighting for. Another day of life—even another hour—

They do not answer my cries. They have all fled. I am alone—alone with the heat and the brilliance—

Now the lip of the crescent creeps across the lawn outside. For the first time I can see the seething lake behind the rim. Like nibbling lips the rim devours all before it.

What can contain the universal solvent?

Heat worse. Lawn gone. Walls shimmering

The thrumming tumult grows.

Physics? Energy?

Energy—or God?

Thou shalt not kill—

The walls are gone. I can move forward, end it. But seize the minutes. Seconds—

Floor glows. Sweat. Pain. Terror.

Pray for us now and in the hour of—

THUS ends the diary of Dr. William Gresham. He who can solve it is a greater psychiatrist than I, than any of our hospital staff. We could explain everything on the grounds of progressive dementia—were it not for one fact:

The fact that the unclad remains of Dr. Gresham were found on the chair before his typewriter desk—charred to a handful of ash!

Only he was so touched. There had been no fire in his room. The furniture, the rugs and draperies, the clothes he had discarded, were unscorched. But the body of the late physicist had been reduced, as by transcendent heat, to the ashes of the elements composing it.

We have sought everywhere—and vainly—for clues to explain this phenomenon. One of our most brilliant staff men came up with what is perhaps the *best* explanation—and it is based rather on fantasy than reason.

"Obsession," he offered, "to its ultimate degree. Complete acceptance of a total sensory hallucination."

"But his body," I demurred. "It was utterly consumed! By what? By an imaginary flame?"

"Why not? Have you never heard, Preston, of stigmata?"

One of Gresham's associates in the physics department of his university presented another thought.

"I don't know that this will help you," he told us, "but I offer it for what it may be worth: Gresham was deeply interested in time-travel. Not necessarily of a physical nature, but of the mind. He believed that the human mind transcends the normal boundaries of space and time—an idea presented by Dr. Rhine, of Duke University, you may remember—and Gresham spent much time experimenting along these lines.

"What success he had, I do not know. But in view of the strange circumstances"

So we are back where we started, utterly unable to offer any reasonable explanation for Dr. Gresham's passing. Two theories are offered; both implausible.

Implausible. That only. Not impossible—though a week ago I would have used the stronger word. But there are many things I do not know, and many more I do not understand. As a scientist, it is my obligation to maintain a reasonable doubt; to withhold judgment till the facts are known.

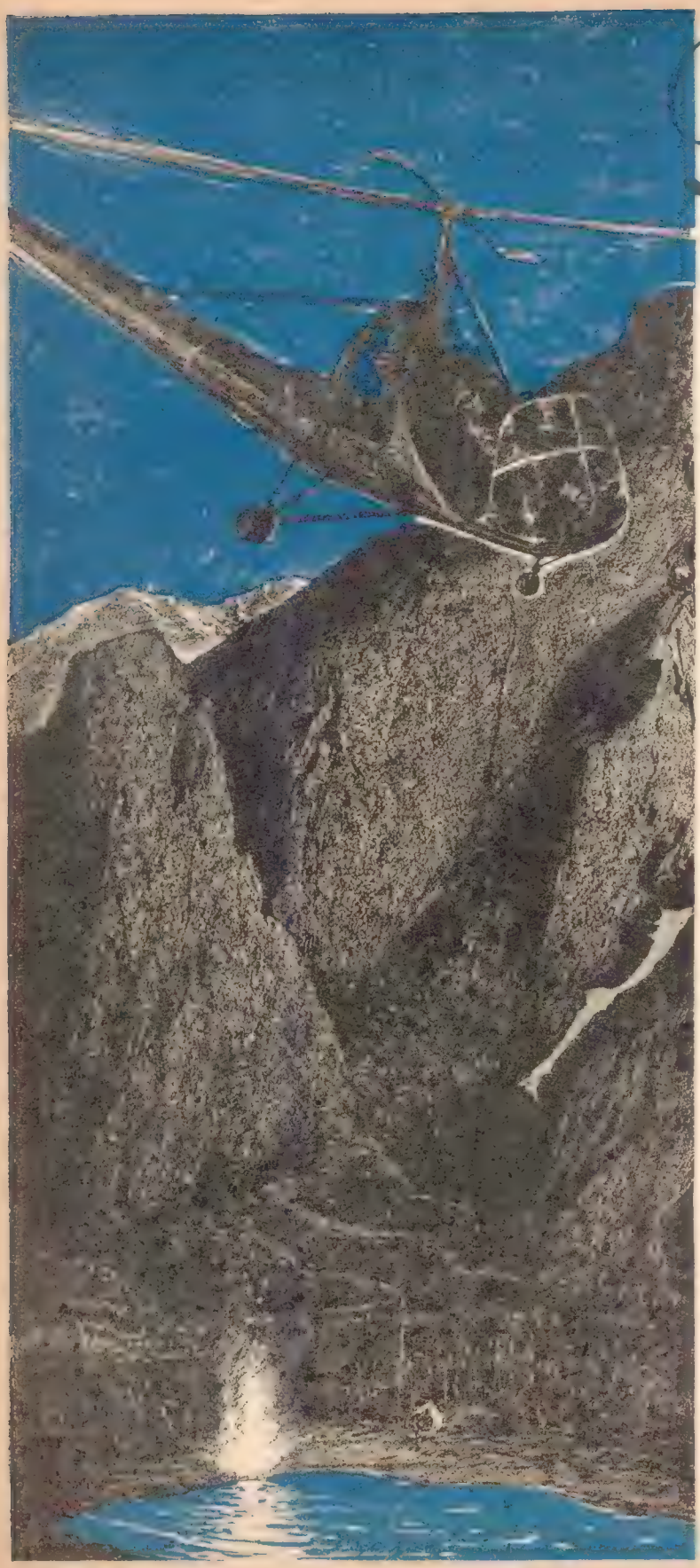
Time-travel? Gresham dismissed with careless ease my question as to the *year*. But suppose his experiments *had* been successful, and that in some strange way he had succeeded in doing that which no man to our knowledge has ever done before—projecting a portion of himself forward into a time which is not yet, a time which is to come?

It would explain so many, many things. All but the final mystery: how his mind could dwell, see, and hear in one time, and his body exist in another.

And—there is another haunting fear that comes to me, the fear that makes me loath to accept this explanation:

If Gresham's senses *were* in a future era—was what he saw and heard what *we* will one day know?

How *far* did his mind journey into the future? One hundred years? Or ten? Or—to next year?



Farmer

Helicopters have a relatively low ceiling, and they asked this crop-duster to go too high over a mountain to make a rescue. He knew his job, however.

HE flew in from the south, following the line of snow-mantled peaks. Far below, to the west, the long trough of the San Joaquin Valley was indistinct with distance and heat-haze. Here in the high Sierra foothills the dense pattern of close-packed mountain pine was broken by a sprawling, grassy plateau that reached, many-fingered, into the bordering trees.

This was Bonanza Meadows, once the summer range of the great Cavanaugh Ranch, where their herds had been driven when the snows melted in spring. Now it lay idle, its light green floor stained with dark patches of creeping milkweed, toxic to cattle, that had made the rich rangeland unfit for grazing.

The grass could be saved. There were sprays that would eliminate the milkweed in one short season. But they would have to be applied from the air; there were no roads up here. And it had never been done. Circling in the clear afternoon sunlight, Johnny Ransome remembered why.

Even from eight thousand feet, Bonanza Meadows looked dangerous. The death-trap, they called it. More than a mile above sea-level, those narrow grassy alleys between the trees spelled crack-up to the pilot of a crop-dusting plane.

Johnny had learned that the hard way. He picked out the fire scar in the brush where he had tried desperately to pull McCloud's battered biplane up, and hadn't quite made it.

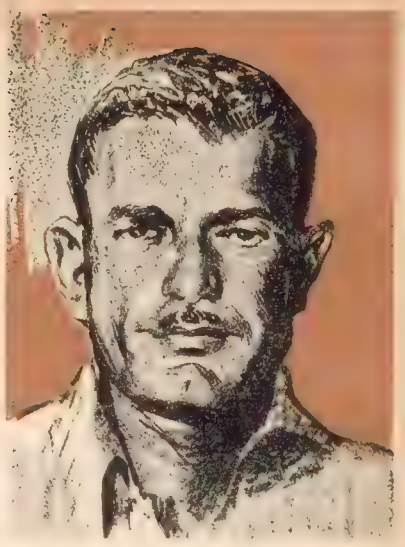
He should have known better. But McCloud had said: "If you're afraid of the job, Ransome, I'll fly it myself."

Okay, Johnny thought irritably, *okay.* Times had changed. He wasn't working for Vance McCloud now. He was in business for himself. He shoved the cyclic stick forward, gaining airspeed as he headed down to-

A moment later he saw it. Deep in the bowl of hills, a fire was burning. He came down in tight circles.

with Wings

by
PETER DOLLAR



Illustrated by Clayton Knight

ward the lower foothills. This new ship of his would never give anyone a thrill, but it would go places that made airplane drivers like McCloud sick to think of.

Below him the land fell away, and over the ranger station at Riley's Bar he reached for the mike. *"Skyranch Tower from helicopter eight-one-oh-seven. Ten miles east of field. Landing instructions. Over."*

"Oh-seven from tower. You are cleared to land following Beechcraft approaching on northwest course."

They read him the wind and altimeter setting as he caught sight of the airport. There was a taxiway now from the strip to the lodge, and a bright new paint job on the roof of the hangar.

WOLF FLAT SKYRANCH
Elevation 4730
VANCE MCCLOUD AIR SERVICE

The place looked prosperous. With his charter line to San Francisco, ferrying skiers in the winter and hikers in the spring, his crop-dusting business and his airport, McCloud was doing all right. He'd had an interest in the lodge two years ago. By now he probably owned the joint.

Johnny grinned wryly, remembering the girl with the copper-colored hair. She was McCloud's too—Susan Corbett, the lady dispatcher, who got stars in her eyes when the flyboys revved up in a dive-bombing run. Maybe that was why he had flown Bonanza Meadows. To impress a girl with red hair, who loved a hot pilot.

It had taken McCloud to straighten him out. Vance had made a special trip to the hospital—to give Johnny the word. Susan was his girl, he said. The boss' girl. "Why, haven't you noticed? Miss Corbett isn't the type who goes for ex-pilots. And you're washed out, Ransome."

But that was two years ago. Two years since he'd piled the old N3N up, and McCloud had fired him. Johnny took a deep breath, glancing down. Below him the Beechcraft was on the base leg. He came around, dropping fast, and put on the stops a hundred feet over the barrier.

"Helicopter oh-seven." He called the control tower. *"Request permission to land number two hangar."*

Someone laughed at the other end of the line. *"Flailing Arm Department from tower. Cleared to land number two hangar. Caution. Stay off the roof. The paint is still wet."*

Johnny grinned. *"Oh-seven. Ha-ha and out."*

SAM MURPHY, the chief mech, looked up, startled, as the helicopter touched down just outside the hangar. Johnny flipped off the switch and slid from the cockpit.

"Murph," he yelled, "you old goat! How ya been?"

Sam extracted his small frame from the engine he was doctoring. "Hello, Ransome," he greeted, forgetting to smile. "I thought you'd given up flying."

"What's bothering you, Sam?" said Johnny good-naturedly. "The price of something you ate?"

"Maybe." The chief eyed the helicopter curiously. "What's with the eggbeater? Yours?"

"I borrowed it from a bank," Johnny told him, keeping it light. "Eighteen months of flying groceries into a Chilean gold mine, and I came back with enough pesos for a small down payment."

"That so?" Sam started climbing back into his engine.

"Wait a minute," Johnny objected. "We used to speak to each other, remember?"

"Sure. But that was in the days before I got educated. Love 'em and leave 'em—how you doing, Ransome?"

"Let's cut the double-talk," Johnny advised, getting peeved. "Spill it. What's on your mind?"

Sam swiped at a gob of grease on his cheek. "What's on my mind? Miss Corbett, that's what. Let me refresh your memory, Junior. You used to be the fair-haired boy around here. The brave Navy pilot. So she fell for your line. What happened? You cracked one up, and you quit. You got scared. You even forgot to come back and say good-by. This made Miss Corbett very unhappy. It was something that pained me deeply to see."

Johnny stared at him stiffly; a lean young man with short-cropped black hair and stubborn chin. "Interesting," he said. "But it seems like you've got your frequencies crossed."

"That ain't the way I heard it."

"From who? Vance McCloud? I'll tell you what, Sam—you remind me to give you the scoop sometime. Meanwhile, how about gassing my clunk?"

"Yeah," Sam said thoughtfully. "Okay."

Johnny battened the rotor blades to the tail boom and walked up the path to the terminal. The sun was low and red in the west; the clear translucency of early twilight outlined the pines, and their scent was pungent on the cooling air. He'd been here before. The hills didn't change.

He entered the waiting-room and turned, half-looking for the familiar face behind the counter. Instead, a freckle-faced kid glanced back at him curiously, and Johnny crossed the room and ducked into an empty phone booth.

"Person to person to Mr. William Cavanaugh at the Cavanaugh Ranch." When the voice came on at the other end he said, "This is John Ransome."

"Who?"

"Ransome. The helicopter. I wrote you about spraying Bonanza Meadows."

"Oh, yes. I tried to get you. Couldn't reach you at that address you gave."

Johnny dumped sixty pounds of sandbag ballast while the boy was being strapped into the cockpit.

Johnny didn't bother to tell him about the job down south folding. "I was on my way up. I'm at Wolf Flat now."

"I'm sorry, Ransome," Cavanaugh said. "I could have saved you the trip. I talked to McCloud from the Skyranch Airport. He's been doing all our dusting except for the Meadows. He tells me you can't get in there safely by air."

So Vance was afraid of it! "That's tough country, Ransome," he heard Cavanaugh saying. "McCloud lost a plane up there two years ago."

At least he didn't know who the pilot had been. "Look, Mr. Cavanaugh," Johnny said. "I can get in there. How about a trial run on Bonanza Meadows? Say tomorrow morning—seven o'clock?"

"Well—" Cavanaugh hesitated. "All right, since you're here. But I'm afraid you'll be going along for the ride. It's a little late to change our plans for this year."

"See you tomorrow," Johnny said. "Seven o'clock."

He dropped the phone on the hook and stared at it soberly. McCloud had fixed things again! And the way his bank account scanned, there was one thing for sure: He had to figure out some way to get this job—or he'd go broke.

He was still thinking about it when he stepped out of the phone booth, and missed the traffic signal. There was a small gasp, and a moment later he was all tangled up with a moving object. The impact was firm, but not unpleasant. Then his nose began to tickle as it became involved with a surface that was both silky and scented. Johnny withdrew his face cautiously and took in a head of copper-colored hair with the glint of stolen sunlight in it. The head moved; a face lifted—and something inside him twanged like a plucked fiddle-string.

She was still more beautiful than a man could remember—Susan Corbett with the slim, lovely figure, the cheeks high-lighted by a faint russet glow beneath the golden tan, the warm, generous mouth. Yet something had changed. He looked into her eyes, and the stars were gone.

She pulled out of it first. Johnny was still in a spin.

"Well, blow me down." Her voice was airy—like the wind off the icehouse. "If it isn't Flyaway Ransome, the lad who ran out."

Johnny had something to say, but his thoughts wouldn't jell. His mind was revolving like a flying saucer. He closed his mouth with an effort.

"My sentiments exactly," Susan concurred. "It's been so nice bumping into you."

Johnny got a good view of her back as she strode from the room. He tore his eyes away, and vented his feelings on the freckle-faced dispatcher, who was watching him, fascinated.

"Relax," he advised acidly. "The crisis is over. Where can I find the airport manager?"

"Last door," the dispatcher croaked, "on the right."

The visibility in the hall was well below minimum, but he made out the lettering on the frosted glass:

AIRPORT MANAGER
S. Corbett

That was news. The door was slightly ajar, and he entered noiselessly. Framed in the plate-glass window that looked across the airstrip to the far valley, a figure was silhouetted against the evening afterglow. Johnny closed the door softly.

"Touching," he observed. "You couldn't have done better if you'd planned it."

Susan whirled and snapped on the desk-lamp. "What are you doing here?"

"I was looking for the airport manager, Miss Corbett. It seems it will be necessary for me to promote some credit."

"Oh, the helicopter, then. It's yours."

"Yeah, the glamour is gone. Hotshot Johnny has become Ransome, the farmer. Too bad, isn't it?"

Color played across her cheeks. "You know all the answers, don't you, Ransome?"

"I should," Johnny admitted. "I learned them the hard way."

"Do tell! Well, you can have your fuel on the cuff. Is that all?"

"Could be." He surveyed the office critically. "Just one little thing I'm curious about. Nice place you have here. And so quick. How did you manage it?"

INSTEAD of answering, she moved to the window again. The runway lights had been turned on, and they twinkled like a string of Christmas candles in the dusk. Johnny stared at her back, listening to the sound of a low-flying plane coming in for a landing.

"What's the trouble, Miss Corbett? Your conscience bothering you?"

"My conscience!" Susan exploded. "Now see here, Johnny Ransome—" She faced him with an angry toss of her head. The plane touched the runway, throttling back, and the glare from its landing lights swept across her face. "That's Vance McCloud," she said, getting hold of herself.

"McCloud?" Johnny studied the strand of bright hair that had escaped and lay across her cheek. "I hate to appear rude, but the topic bores me. Haven't you anything more interesting to say?"

"If I have, it escapes me."

"Take South America," he offered helpfully. "That's an interesting spot. Lots of mountains down there, but very few redheads."

"You take it," Susan said. "I can't use it."

"Since seeing you last," he continued, undaunted, "I've put in some time playing tag with the Andes. I also followed every one I saw. The redheads, that is."

"I'm not a bit surprised," Susan snapped.

"Only, they always turned out to be somebody else."

She looked at him with a sudden, startled glance. Her eyes were still defiant, but her voice lost conviction. "I think you'd better go now. A lot of things have happened—"

"I know," Johnny said. "Here's the one I remember." He stepped forward. His arms went around her, and he felt her resisting. And then, suddenly, he wasn't feeling anything, any more. He was riding the roller coaster at the county fair, and those drums he was hearing must be his heart.

"Look—"

"Johnny—"

They both spoke at once.

"Yes," Susan murmured. "But—but Vance said that you'd quit, that you weren't coming back."

He kissed her again.

"Let's find some nice crowded place," he suggested shakily, "where we can talk things over without interruptions."

Her face clouded. "No, Johnny, I can't. Not tonight."

"That's right," said a condescending voice behind them. "And not just tonight, Lieutenant. Any night you happen to get ideas."

He was standing in the doorway—McCloud, hard-faced, assured, who cleaned up with his flying school during the war, and because he hadn't been one, would always resent the men who'd worn wings. Who called Johnny "Lieutenant," so he wouldn't forget it.

Johnny grunted: "The name is 'Mister.' Remember, McCloud?"

VANCE walked across the room, big, handsome, still sure of himself. "Why, Ransome!" he chuckled unpleasantly. "And I thought you'd be grateful. You might have got hurt, horning in on the Cavanaugh job."

"Cavanaugh?" Susan cried. "You mean you came back to fly Bonanza Meadows again?"

"That was the idea—until your friend fixed me up." Johnny faced him. "I'll be seeing Mr. Cavanaugh tomorrow morning. Any message you'd like me to give him?" McCloud's smile stiffened. "No? Well, in that case, why don't you run along? Miss Corbett and I were about to leave."

"Johnny!" Susan's blue eyes were pleading. "I was trying to tell you. . . . I have a date tonight—with Vance."

"You see?" McCloud asked with sarcastic amusement.

Johnny got it. He glanced around the room, taking in the big desk, the sign on the door, and the answer smacked him like a roundhouse right to the jaw. The boss' girl! Vance had told him the truth two years ago. "Sure," he said. "I see."

"Just a minute, Lieutenant." McCloud's voice stopped him, and he turned in the doorway. "There's one other thing you might like to know."

"What's that?"

Vance grinned. "Your lipstick's on crooked."

The night air was cool, but it had no effect. Johnny's face kept on burning. He checked into the lodge. It was Saturday night, and when he got down to the lobby, the music had started in the dining-room. He dug out a lonesome four-bit piece and went into the bar. There was a good view of the dance floor through the open door, and he caught sight of Susan in something tight-fitting and blue. She was in McCloud's arms, but she didn't look happy. Then someone climbed onto the stool beside him. It was Sam Murphy, all dressed up in clean khaki pants and a bright wool shirt.

"Hiya, farmer!" he grinned. "I hear you're going out on the Cavanaugh job."

Johnny scowled, watching the dancers. "Word gets around. What's happened? We speaking?"

"I been thinking about things," Sam informed him cheerfully. "Doing some checking. Funny, a hot pilot like you flying one of them overstuffed dragonflies."

"You think so?"

"What happened to the glory music?" Sam wanted to know. "They turn off the record?"

"Times have changed," Johnny told him. "I'm strictly an ex-hero. It didn't seem to pay."

"Yeah," Sam said, "tell me all about that." He beckoned to the bartender. "Another straight shot, Harry, for the ex-hero, here."

Johnny got to his feet. "Thanks, but some other time, Murph. I have sleeping to do."

"Uh-huh," Sam said quizzically. "Well, happy dreams, Junior!"

The dreams didn't come. Johnny crawled into bed, but his mind was still on the merry-go-round. *Don't be a dope, Ransome,* he argued. *What's the girl supposed to do for two years? Enter a convent?*

HE hadn't answered that question a long time later when the telephone rang. He must have dozed off, because the sound made him jump.

"Johnny? This is Susan," a lovely voice said.

He gulped: "Who?"

"Susan Corbett. Will you come right down to the airport office? Sam's on his way to pick you up in the jeep."

It was three-thirty in the morning, but the landing lights at the field were on, and the terminal was lit up like an all night drive-in. Above it, stars winked in a black, moonless sky.

Sam led the way down the hall, and they found Susan leaning over an airways chart on her desk, listening to a ruddy-faced man in a Ranger's uni-

form. She was still wearing the blue dress. It fitted even better when you got up close.

"The doctor packed in yesterday morning with a two-way radio," the Ranger was saying.

Sam closed the door. "This is Mr. Lundgren," Susan told Johnny, "the chief Park Ranger, Mr. Ransome."

"Glad to know you, Ransome." The Ranger's handshake was firm. "We've had an accident at Buell Lake," he explained, indicating a small patch on the chart. "A pack trip. There's a twelve-year-old boy up there with a severe concussion, and we can't take him out over the trails. Miss Corbett tells me you may have the answer."

"It was Sam's idea," Susan cut in abruptly. "He thinks with your helicopter—"

She didn't finish, because the door opened and McCloud burst in. The amusement was gone. "Why didn't you call me?" He blinked at Johnny. "What's he doing here?"

"There's been an accident," Lundgren repeated patiently, "at one of the high lakes in the park. We hoped Mr. Ransome—"

"I'll handle it!" Vance had had a few drinks, maybe a couple too many. "Check the amphibian, Murphy. I'll take off just as soon as I get some daylight."

"It's Buell Lake, McCloud," Sam informed him softly.

"Buell Lake!" McCloud's bluster collapsed like a punctured balloon. "Why didn't you say so?" he shouted defensively. "You think I've got a hole in my head? Why, you couldn't get in there with a sky hook."

Susan had been watching him apprehensively. Now she blurted: "I know, Vance. I told them." And catching the relief that flooded her voice, Johnny knew why she'd rung him in on the deal—to make sure that Vance didn't take any chances. He glanced at his watch. He had a date with Cavanaugh in exactly three hours. But someone had to. . . . *Calm down, sucker,* he warned himself. *McCloud just gave you your out.*

He said suddenly, not looking at her: "Don't worry, Miss Corbett. Your friend won't get hurt."

"Oh, no," Susan cried, flushing. "You don't think—"

Johnny turned to Lundgren, cutting her off. "A helicopter could make it."

"You see?" Sam chortled. "What did I tell you?"

McCloud rasped: "Shut up, Murphy! You only work here."

"Air Rescue tried it with a helicopter," Lundgren frowned, "from Paradise Pass yesterday afternoon. The pilot couldn't get airborne."

"That was yesterday afternoon," Johnny said. "The air was warm. I'm going in there tonight."

"What did you say the ceiling was on that eggbeater of yours?" Sam asked suddenly.

"I didn't say. How high is this lake?"

"Eight thousand feet. But you'll have to go in over Bald Mountain. Ten thousand, two hundred."

"Okay, that's my ceiling, then. Ten thousand two hundred."

"What do you think, Miss Corbett?" the Ranger demanded.

"I don't know." Susan looked worried. "You hadn't mentioned the Air Rescue attempt."

"Wait a minute," McCloud broke in. He was happy again, and Johnny could almost see the gears meshing in his brain. This was what Vance wanted. Once Johnny took off, even if he made it, he wouldn't be flying Bonanza Meadows that day. And without the Cavanaugh job, he'd be out of McCloud's hair. He'd be out of business.

"Yes, let Ransome try it," Vance suggested amiably. "Why, hasn't he told you? A good fighter pilot can do anything."

Johnny grunted: "Thanks, McCloud."

Vance shrugged, swaggering to the door. "Good luck, Lieutenant," he smirked.

Lundgren took off for the ranger station. Susan followed, not looking back, and Johnny trudged through the waiting-room and down to the hangar. The helicopter was standing on the apron, fat-bellied and awkward in the glare of the floodlights. Sam was stripping it down. He paused, pulling out the radio receiver.

"Beat it," he ordered. "Take five."

Sitting at the stove in Sam's cubbyhole office, Johnny heard him running the engine up, watched shadows whirl on the walls of the hangar. *All right, Ransome,* he thought, *you're a hero again. How does it feel?* It didn't feel good. Because the ceiling on the helicopter was nine thousand nine hundred. And now that the chips were down, he wondered if he really could push it over ten thousand feet.

The dispatcher stuck his head in the door. "All set up the line. We're talking to Riley's Bar and the lake."

Johnny climbed into the cockpit, and strapped the chart to his leg.

"Take it easy, Junior." Sam's voice was drowned as he pulled the starter and the engine r.p.m. swung to twelve hundred. The rotor blades caught up; the tachometer needles overlapped; and he raised them slowly to twenty-seven hundred. Check the mags. The engine was smooth. Brakes off. Three thousand r.p.m. Now lift it. Johnny pulled up slightly on the collective pitch lever, and hovered a few feet above the ground before he eased the overhead stick forward. At forty miles an hour, he started upstairs, climbing east into the black morning sky.

He had eight thousand feet over Riley's Bar, but the rate of climb was beginning to lag. He glanced at the chart on his leg. Twelve miles to Bald Mountain. Twelve, maybe fourteen minutes to get over the top. He changed course ten degrees, watching the climb indicator waver. Two hundred—a hundred and fifty—a hundred feet a minute. A faint orange glow appeared in the distance, the firemarker at Bonanza Meadows. Johnny headed for it, feeling the cold that knifed down from the hills.

He came in over the edge of the Meadows, and Bald Mountain was an indistinct dark mass crouched beyond it. Higher peaks shut out the weak light in the east. He glanced at the altimeter again. Nine thousand, nine fifty. The needle shivered, stationary, refusing to climb. At that temperature and altitude, it would be reading four hundred low. So he actually had ten thousand three fifty. But he couldn't see anything. The ridge might be higher. It might be a hundred feet above him. And it was coming up fast. Too fast! He felt cold, suddenly, and not from the wind. Involuntarily, he shoved the cyclic stick sidewise, and shied away in a wide, sweeping turn.

Get out of here, he thought shakily. *Get the hell out while you're still in one piece!* His mind told him to run, but his muscles didn't respond. He was completing the circle, boring on to the east, and it was too late to think. He looked back once. The flame on Bonanza Meadows was gone. A black mass of rock rushed up, slipped below him. Another! His eyes ached, straining forward into the gloom. And then, a moment later, out of nothing, he saw it. Far below, deep in the bowl of the hills, a fire was burning.

He came down in tight circles over the lake, touched the wheels to the beach, and cut the engine. A white-faced kid, bundled in blankets, lay waiting on an improvised stretcher of boughs. Johnny dumped sixty pounds of sandbag ballast while the boy was being strapped into the cockpit beside him, and ten minutes later they were airborne again.

They circled the lake, gaining speed and altitude as the light grew in the east. Johnny could see the ridge now. He made a last run the length of the valley, squeezed over the top and started down hill. The runway lights

"Miss Corbett suggested the same terms we were giving McCloud. You can sign the papers at the ranch."

at Wolf Flat were pale in the dusk when he eased over the trees and set it down gently in front of the hangar.

He felt pretty good until the reception committee thinned out and the boy had been loaded into the waiting ambulance. He leaned against the tail boom. It was six o'clock. He would have been taking off for Bonanza Meadows about now. Instead, he was sitting here with his ship stripped down. Well, it was a great clunk. He'd have to mention that fact when he gave it back to the bank.

He watched glumly as Sam Murphy steamed up, wearing an expression of revolting good cheer.

"Couple of people," Sam grinned. "Say they'd like to see you."

"Collection agents?" asked Johnny.

"Just step this way, Junior," Sam said, taking off rapidly in the direction of the terminal.

Susan was standing on the steps talking to two men. One of them, McCloud, whirled angrily and stomped through the door to the waiting-room. The other, a tall, gray-haired man in high top boots and a heavy jumper, extended his hand.

"Mr. Ransome? I'm William Cavanaugh."

Johnny was looking at Susan. She wore a pair of Sam's coveralls over the blue dress, and her hair was tousled. But she was beautiful, anyway. She lowered her eyes, and he pulled himself together.

"Uh—glad to know you," he croaked, finding his tongue. "Say, I'm sorry about the run on Bonanza Meadows. I won't—"

"Forget it, Ransome," Cavanaugh smiled. "This'll do. I didn't think you could cut it when Miss Corbett called and dragged me out of bed. But I'm convinced. You won't have any trouble with Bonanza Meadows—or the rest of our stuff."

The rest of their stuff! If Johnny remembered right, that took in most of the county. He said stupidly: "Miss Corbett? Huh?"

"Yes. We've been discussing the contract. She suggested the same terms we were giving McCloud. You can sign the papers at the ranch tomorrow."

"I can?" Johnny asked, dazed. "I mean—oh, sure. See you then."

Cavanaugh started down the steps, and Johnny turned toward Susan. She wasn't there. He glanced about wildly, and spied her hurrying along the path to the parking lot.

"I can't hear you," Sam said. "Speak louder, please."

Johnny yelled: "Miss Corbett, he said. This was her idea."

"You're so right," Sam admitted complacently. "And say, while we're on the subject—you need a good mech?"

Two men with cameras were coming out of the waiting-room.

"You're hired, Sam," Johnny called, loping down the stairs. "Your first job is to beat off the press."

"The jeep!" Sam shouted after him. "The red one."

SUSAN was backing it out of a parking slot when Johnny arrived. He clambered aboard and flipped off the ignition.

"If you don't mind!" She reached for the switch, and he grabbed her hand. That roller-coaster feeling was starting again, but he swallowed his heart and hung on.

"Miss Corbett," he barked, "let's come to the point. You cooked up this Cavanaugh deal."

"All right," Susan said. "Are you all through now?"

"Uh-uh." Johnny still had her hand. "Not yet. You have explaining to do."

"Look," she pronounced coldly, "I would have done the same for any dumb creature. You probably weren't bright enough to notice it, Ransome, but you were being framed."

"True," Johnny agreed. "However, there's still one little thing that puzzles me. What about McCloud, your beloved employer?"

"Ex-employer," Susan corrected. "If you must know, Sam and I had a short talk with McCloud last night. We straightened out certain items of propaganda."

"Like, for instance, item one—who ran out on who two years ago?"

"Yes," Susan said softly.

Johnny slid his arm across the back of the seat. It was getting light, but that didn't matter. Because the stars were just coming out in her eyes.

"That's nice," he said, gazing into them deeply. "So right away you send me out to fly over Bald Mountain. Suppose I had flubbed it?"

"Oh, but I knew you wouldn't." Her glance wavered. "You see, I believed what Vance said about you. A good fighter pilot can do anything."

Johnny's arm tightened on her shoulders. "You mean *anything*, Miss Corbett?"

"Well—" Susan murmured.

So he kissed her. She was right.

. . . THE END

Spy Hunt in

RUSSIA WAS OUR ALLY THEN, AND WE SHIPPED VAST QUANTITIES OF MATERIEL TO THE SOVIETS THROUGH IRAN. THE GERMANS STROVE HARD TO STOP THESE SHIPMENTS; AND OUR C.I.C. MEN TOOK LONG CHANCES TO THWART THE GERMANS.

by THOMAS JOHNSON
and FLETCHER PRATT

TWO men in Persian dress emerged from a secluded house in Tehran. As the taller glanced about nervously, two men in civilian clothes, plainly Americans, darted from evening shadows and jammed pistols into the backs of the Persians.

"Put 'em up!" they commanded tersely.

The taller Persian obeyed instantly; the stockier balked. But a black sedan bearing another two figures in mufti ground to a stop before them, blocking escape. Into the car the tall man was propelled by his captors. The stocky man fought back furiously. He had to be grappled by the two men outside, and yanked by a strapping figure within before, with a yelp of pain, he subsided into the back seat. Then the car sped off through narrow streets to a victory decisive though uncelebrated.

It was a victory that, while crucial in the late world-wide hot war, also has ironic repercussions in today's cold war. Iran's oil, prize of the strategic Middle East and valuable to the Western world, including this country, has been snatched from Allied control and may pass to the Russians. Yet only lately that oil, and Iran and Russia too, were saved from hostile plotters by a handful of young men fresh from the least guileful land on earth. They were of the unique Counter Intelligence Corps that guards the U. S. Army's secrets and ferrets out those who threaten its security, be they disloyal Americans or enemy spies. Notable among its undercover achievements still untold is the *coup* in international secret service that began with the swift events and momentous consequences of that July night in 1943 under the crescent moon of Iran.

For they were C.I.C. agents who had silently snatched the swarthy men and were driving them to the low-lying gray villa, up a dead-end street, that was C.I.C. headquarters in Iran's capital.

Once arrived at the villa, they escorted their unwilling guests inside.

"Where's Franz Mayr?" they asked their prisoners then.

Both Persians shook their heads violently and persistently. By the beard of the Prophet, they vowed, they did not know where the German Master Spy was. One of the Americans approached the tall man.

"I'll give this one a separate interrogation," he said.

Leading him into the next room and closing the door, with a whispered "thanks!" he let the Persian slip out into the darkness of a side alley.

Meanwhile the stocky man, still excitedly protesting that he knew nothing of Mayr, reached suddenly into the recesses of his clothing. The Americans fell upon him and produced a small 25-caliber pistol in an ornate leather holster that was fastened to his crotch by a tasseled silken cord. They also produced such bellows of rage and pain from the Persian that they ran quick exploratory hands over his body.

"Two ribs broken," they agreed. "He *would* be tough about getting into the car. But anyway, he'll have to help us find Mayr before that so-and-so sabotages the Russians right out of the war."

That was the most serious danger to the Allied cause that the Middle East held that summer of 1943. Iran

Iran

Illustrated by FREDERICK CHAPMAN

Two Americans darted from evening shadows and jammed pistols into the backs of the Persians. "Put'em up!" they commanded tersely.

was crucial for all the Allies. It was the crossroads between East and West where Hitler and the Japanese might meet; and the source of oil essential to mechanized warfare. For the Russians, however, it was the utterly vital cornucopia that poured into their outstretched hands American and British munitions, lacking which they could not hope to hurl back the still formidable Nazis.

The delivery of this indispensable aid was an achievement surpassingly ingenious and generous. American supplies to Russia through Iran were worth eleven billion dollars—4,500,000 tons of food and munitions, including artillery, trucks, tanks and planes. They were unloaded in Persian harbors we had well-nigh made over; and larger items were assembled in plants we had especially built. Thence they were shipped across Iran through desert heat and mountain cold, eight hundred miles by hairpin truck highway or a miraculous railroad, partly rebuilt and largely operated by Americans, through 224 tunnels, over 4772 bridges, to the eagerly waiting Russians.

In their extremity they had begged for help, and we gave them all they asked, sometimes faster than they could handle it. This we did, with typical American innocence and openhandedness, hoping to make them our friends for the future peace of the world, not merely to keep them from being "sabotaged right out of the war." Who would suppose from their words and acts today that they had been saved from that danger too by Americans—the first agents of the Counter Intelligence Corps to reach Iran?

These were decent young men from a civilization where human life and dignity are cherished, and a man usually tells the truth. But they had been taught that "in espionage it is not permitted to have either ethics or morals," and they were hand-picked and trained investigators, mostly lawyers and newspapermen. They were fascinated by Tehran's winding streets, sights and sounds, bazaars and bizarres. Ignoring stench and heat, they asked only to get on with the job. If a few, having carefully camouflaged their Americanism beneath European or Levantine garb, then betrayed it by drinking ice water in public, they did not do it twice. They learned quickly. They realized the importance of their mission when, upon arriving in December, 1942, they counted 110 supply ships for Russia crowding Basra harbor. But they found there was a real and looming danger that their cargoes might never reach Russia.

Colonel Godfrey, local chief of Britain's astute Security Intelligence, Middle East—S.I.M.E.—uncovered to the Americans' astonished eyes one of the war's most dangerous Nazi conspiracies. Subtle yet audacious, it involved a fifth column of crooked Iranian politicians and venal generals and business men, ready to betray Iran as Norway was betrayed, for German gold. Their guiding genius was Franz Mayr, one of the war's least-known but most sinister secret agents. He did not look like a movie spy. He was inconspicuous and physically slight. His piglike eyes squinted down a foxlike nose. But he was in the prime of life, cynical and ambitious almost to paranoia—a fact that changed history.

In 1940, before Germany attacked Russia, Mayr had entered Iran posing as a business man. He was followed by other Nazi agents, spies and propagandists. They contacted a Japanese spy ring that included the director of the Iranian Government

tourist bureau and the head of the Army medical corps. Under Mayr, all began preparing Iran for an eventual German invasion, the spies sending out information by the radio of the supposedly friendly German consulate, the propagandists spreading tales of Nazi greatness, including one that Hitler was a descendant of Mahomet, born with a sacred green belly-band! Some Moslems believed this; others found Mayr's bribes alone amply persuasive. Even Iran's ruler, Riza Shah Pahlevi, began to show Nazi leanings. And the German invaders of Russia were forcing the hard-pressed Red Army back, ever nearer to Iran. So Russian and British troops entered the country, ousted the ruler, installed his friendly son Mohammed Riza, the present Shah, and jailed the spies, including Mayr —who promptly bribed his Iranian guards and escaped to Armenia.

Happy ending? Not quite, explained Colonel Godfrey. Too many Iranians, including some who were highly placed, still admired Hitler, and now raged at the Allies' presence. An Armenian had lately confided to a British agent that he could impart astonishing information. Duly recompensed, he said he had been chauffeuring for the head of German espionage in Iran. This master spy's name was Hussein Khan; he lived in such a house in Isfahan. As authorized by treaty, S.I.M.E. surrounded the house. At dark of the moon they swarmed through doors and windows. Nobody home!

"But look!" cried one raider. "The blighter left a brief-case!"

This incredible treasure trove contained papers and a diary. Now who, engaged in the most secretive calling of all, would keep a diary, even in cipher? But there it was. British cryptographers promptly broke the cipher, with startling revelation. Hussein Khan was a cover name. The diarist was none other than Franz Mayr. The Nazi agent was back in Iran, weaving a new network, stronger than the old.

His first-priority job was to report to Hitler all about the incredible American achievement in succoring Russia through Iran; what supplies would reach his foes, when, in what quantities. Mayr was finding out about that already, through some of the thousands of Iranian employees of the Americans. Like good Levantines they were exacting plenty in payment. Mayr was also buying up the sheiks of the roving tribes that, comprising a fourth of Iran's fifteen million people, nearly controlled her desert southern half. These ancient feudists have the morals of macaws. Whenever a train stopped for water, they would rush it, trying to pry open the doors and run away with anything loose. They were not above placing ties on the track to produce wealth-giving wrecks, and the sheiks were expert shakedown artists, very touchy. Sufficient emoluments might induce them further to delay Russian supplies by more systematic sabotage. Already sand was appearing in journal boxes and sugar in gasoline; one night all the radiator hoses of a truck convoy were cut. Sabotage was feared of the world's biggest oil refinery at Abadan. These saboteur-guerrillas were well armed, for Mayr had helped one tribe capture a government arsenal and eighteen thousand rifles. They might try an all-out attack to wreck the railroad.

That danger alone was serious enough, but Colonel Godfrey's informants now said that Mayr was spinning his webs not among the tribesmen alone. In several cities he had organized an anti-Ally "Free Iran" movement, with members in the army and police, among business men and even mullahs. Some influential politicians, including Members of Parliament, had joined him. Using his knowledge of the Iranian language, he was playing upon their lust for power and cash. He had fabricated an infernal machine that was busily ticking. When would it explode?

Some alarming reports said that the Master Spy was plotting a revolt to oust the pro-Ally Shah and seize control of Iran just as the *Reichswehr* resumed its arrested advance from the nearby Caucasus. Then Mayr's fifth column would welcome them to Iran's oil and the waters of the Persian Gulf, which German submarines could sweep clear of Allied shipping. The Red Army, cut off from American-British aid, would founder miserably. A great design, whose success required not only zeal and cunning, which Mayr possessed, but bribery *ad lib.* But he was being bled white of the life-blood of Mid-Eastern intrigue—money.

But he was getting some, said the British. He couldn't ask Berlin direct, or Ankara, where the notorious Ambassador Von Papen was supervising Nazi Mid-eastern intrigues, for both his radio sending sets were broken. It was doubly frustrating that his receiver brought him frequent exhortations to action he could not take without more funds. But how could he tell them so? Then he noted that the shapely limbs of his Iranian mistress, Lalla Imara, bore a sheen lustrous and unwonted.

"Where did you get those nylons?" he roared suspiciously, for in the Levant such hosiery was either a love token or a bribe for information. The lady protested that she had bought them from a Tehran merchant, an honorable smuggler, who crossed the Turkish border.

"Just the man I'm looking for!" thought Mayr. He called in a trusted go-between, a dope-peddler he called *"Dickehaut,"* the "Thick-skinned." Through him Mayr sent the smuggler a letter to deliver to Von Papen, asking for money, a radio set, and an operator. The smuggler took the letter to the wily German diplomat, but brought back five thousand dollars and naught else. Again Mayr appealed to Von Papen. He pointed out that the Germans in the Caucasus were so near they could send into Iran, to three landing-places he had prepared, planes bearing a wireless set, an operator, and the real money he must have. He enclosed a code in which Berlin could tell him the date and place, by concealing the coded message in the radio news broadcasts addressed to German troops in Africa. Mayr would listen on a receiving set he had.

Then the diary ended—maddeningly—having revealed a dangerous intrigue but not how to thwart it. The book concealed Mayr's accomplices by cover-names. S.I.M.E., a worthy unit of the consummate British Intelligence service, had queried its many informants, searched its voluminous files that listed thousands of spies, stool-pigeons, criminals, prostitutes. It had gleaned inklings of the identities of certain of Mayr's co-conspirators. Some were powerful in Iran's corrupt political life. They were shielding the Nazi master spy in some lair where even now he might be receiving the aid he needed to carry out his dangerous plans to hamstring the Red Army. He must be caught, his great design frustrated. But how, when the very Persian police one asked for aid might be in his pay?

The new American C.I.C. agents were astonished at this revelation of high intrigue and low, of a hunted man coolly arranging to take over a nation. This was the first big foreign case our amateur spy-hunters had faced. Enthusiastically they joined the veteran British in the Middle East's most remarkable wartime spy-hunt; a spy-hunt for victory, which could be assured only when the quarry was caught and his plot frustrated. Even some American officials thought the whole Mayr story "too fantastic," and gave C.I.C. little co-operation.

Nevertheless, Americans and British did a masterly job of protecting the hyper-sensitive railroad and all its vulnerable bridges and tunnels. They forbade anyone to approach bridge or tunnel, yard or roundhouse, camp or plant or port, without an Al-

lied pass whose type changed frequently and irregularly. All Iranians employed by the Americans were checked, for the British cryptographers were adducing from Mayr's diary indications that more of them than we had supposed, railroad employees especially, were in his pay. But the cipher was sometimes baffling. Would C.I.C. try to identify these men?

THE Americans did, themselves posing as employees, asking clever questions, reading suspect mail, even counting carbon sheets lest someone be making extra copies of secret papers.

They employed neither a magnifying glass nor "brilliant deductions." Knowing that the roast-beef medium of Intelligence work is the jigsawing together of bits and pieces, they spun their own net of informants, of stool pigeons from all strata, high and low —which was not difficult in the Levant for an American in civilian clothes.

One began by offering the man who swept out the compound a package of American cigarettes for some black-market beef. With slightly larger largesse one cultivated the riffraff of an Oriental city: thieves, prostitutes, beggars. Then one progressed to higher strata, bearing richer gifts, post-exchange gadgets to tempt the best sources of information. Not merely cigarettes and candy, but flashlights, tires, clothing; all were precious as platinum in Iran in 1943, even to politicians, industrialists and engineers. Mayr had cultivated many such, the diary revealed, to win their support for the invading Nazis. Now we began to investigate them and cultivate them. Agent William J. Tilli, for instance, spent four months on a big hide merchant who anticipated furnishing the invading German army with shoe leather. And with the gadgets, the Americans imparted some understanding of the ingenious, powerful land that produced them. "We'll win this war!" they said confidently, and many whom Mayr had counted his, became ours.

The Americans kept their informants' identities secret to save their lives. Word came of a meeting where one native, who had been reporting to us on tribal intrigues, had been publicly exposed and beaten, and the British and Americans had been denounced in a harangue by a tall, hawk-faced, tuft-bearded Arab. This chieftain said that if he caught any more of our filthy spies, he would kill them. He was Abdul Karrin Fatemi, a Levantine Capone rich from trafficking in liquor, drugs and women; also tires, rifles or anything that could be stolen from Allied trains or dumps. This black-marketeer had organized a dummy corporation that monopolized trucking in one province. In forcing business men to patronize him, he was aided by tribesmen who also sheltered him in their nomad tents. The British Provost Marshal, and the American who controlled some C.I.C. agents, suspected him of providing Mayr with a desert hideout. After long investigation, they caught Fatemi with twenty-six stolen trucks. But Persian officials "lost" some of the evidence, and only after interminable delays and protests were the Allies told he had been imprisoned for two years. Still, the search had brought other and more momentous results.

Members of the C. I. C. spun their net of informants from all strata, high and low.

Knowing they struggled against time, the British spy-hunters had been vigilantly monitoring the air waves for Nazi radio messages. Suddenly an unknown transmitter opened with two bursts of three-quarters of an hour daily, always at a different time and on a different frequency. It was a code which the interceptors thought was German, but could not read; nor could they identify the exact spot whence it came, but the source seemed to be somewhere nearby. Flushed from desert cover by the hunt for himself and Fatemi, the audacious Mayr had come right to Tehran!

The Nazis must have used those wings of modern espionage, the plane and parachute-drop, to send him the desperately needed money, radio-set and operator. Now, while buying and transmitting to his superiors daily more information on the flow of Allied supplies to Russia, Mayr was discussing with them action to stop that flow. Indications that that action might be a sudden and dangerous stroke came from informants who said Mayr's agents were building secret landing-strips where Nazi paratroopers might descend. Then they would lead an uprising of Mayr's underground against the Allies and the friendly Shah, including a strong attack by tribesmen to cut the American railroad. One of the Quashgai Khans was known to have gone to Berlin. Was it to discuss this blow?

The Anglo-Americans asked the Russians, for whose salvation, primarily, we were working, if they knew. Our "Allies" had flooded their northern zone with propagandists and spies. Some of them sifted into our southern zone and spied upon us until recognized by the pistol-bulges in their ill-fitting clothing. But Russian spies proved useless in hunting their most dangerous enemy.

Almost frantically, the Allies spread another alarm: "Where is Mayr?

"Smoke?" asked an agent. From beneath the coverlet emerged a right hand with a bent third finger.

Where is Dickehaut?" The Americans contacted their informants; some very secretly, others very openly—a casual meeting in the street, a light for a cigarette, an ostentatiously brief, pleasant word, no more. One too-ardent young agent set his stool-pigeons calling at doors, asking: "Is Mr. Mayr here?" This was quickly stopped, but—had Mayr heard of it and fled? Tensely the radio operators awaited that night's message. Mayr was still unsuspecting, still at work.

Then the Allied net landed a big fish, not to be identified even now. British and Americans both believed this informant when he said:

"I will help you arrest a man who knows where Mayr is—if you will arrest me too. And—be a little rough. How do you say? 'Make it look good,' to anyone watching. Well, then, that man is Ali Abassi, the drug-peddler. He lives in northeast Tehran."

This tip was so hot it was agreed that the Americans and their black sedan should collaborate in the virtual abduction of the man who knew Mayr. In the reception committee were included a British agent, C.I.C. Special Agent Glenn G. Schroeder—now a Chicago lawyer—and a member of the honorary reserve—and the husky agent who had pulled the prisoner into the car. The broken ribs were quite unintentional, and were not utilized to torture a confession from the prisoner. There was no need, for that miserable individual not only peddled drugs, but he used them, and so was their slave. Denied them, and skillfully questioned by British and Americans, he opened up like a melon and yielded seeds whence sprouted victory.

For Ali Abassi was Dickehaut, and he told all he knew, which was plenty. Mayr had received by parachute from the nearby Germans not one man but six. All were trained saboteurs, and four of them were radio operators with sets. Now they were sending messages in rotation, each from a different house, which explained why the direction-finders had failed. No, he did not know where the houses were. Mayr slipped from one hide-out to another. He might be bearded, mustached or clean-shaven, in European dress or native. He met people only after dark, in the street, speaking Persian lest he attract attention. Nervous strain had thinned him, and he continually tapped a cigarette held in a twisted third finger. He knew that the British, and now the Americans, were after him. But he had long eluded the British, and to the Americans he said: *"Pfui!"*

No, no, no—frantically—Dickehaut did not know where Mayr was. But he would tell (then, gentlemen, can I have some of the powder, *please?*) the names of some of Mayr's men. He named one, Yezid, for whom S.I.M.E. produced a thick dossier. They arrested him, and asked the old vital question: "Where is Mayr?"

For two days, while Mayr's radios continued to flash their cryptic messages, the bearded Iranian refused to answer. Then, worn down, he said: "I'll lead you to him."

Now the hunters thought they glimpsed the quarry. They released

Yezid, but unknown to him, put a tail on him. He amazed his British shadows by going to Persian police headquarters, and emerging accompanied by a police officer. On the outskirts of Tehran they entered the house of a character named Hamun. Following, S.I.M.E. found in the cellar, sitting at a radio key, one of the newly arrived German parachutists, secret operative Werner Rockstrom. S.I.M.E. waited spider-like, in the parlor, and in walked two flies: a Persian army sergeant-major and a twitchy little man named Dr. Niriz. They admitted they had come to escort Rockstrom to another sending station. The Doctor quaked with fear.

"I always hated this spying," he pled. "Lalla got me into it—she and that devil Mayr."

DR. NIRIZ admitted with relief that Mayr's mistress was his niece, that Mayr's hideaway for that night was his house. The trail opened by Dickehaut seemed to have led to the quarry's den. At three next morning British agents entered the house. They found a sleeping figure shrouded in a coverlet save for a swarthy face. When awakened, the sleeper protested in Persian that he was not Mayr and, questioned further, never had heard of him.

"Smoke?" asked an agent, extending a pack.

From beneath the coverlet emerged a right hand with a bent third finger. It selected a cigarette, poised it, then as questions still pressed, began to tap it on the left hand. The agent produced a typewritten sheet.

"This paper," he said, "is called *'Personal description: Franz Mayr.'* It says: *'Has third finger bent on right hand. Habit: When holding cigarette in right hand, to tap it continuously.'* Also: *'Eyes light blue.'* And so they are, stain or no stain, Herr Mayr."

Entered another agent bearing two more brief-cases. They contained the final blueprint for the great design. From them, and a finally loquacious Mayr, came his story.

He had been unable to decipher the radio message from Berlin. Then a courier from Ankara had brought him a big pill wrapped in a sheet of paper. But neither heat, lemon juice nor even the pill, which he cooked in hot water, alcohol and acid would develop invisible writing. So Mayr missed connections with the parachutists, who nearly starved in the desert before tribesmen sneaked them into Tehran. They brought news that astounded Mayr. Another German agent, Major Schultze, had promised a tribal chieftain that Hitler would make him Khan of all south Iran if he would wreck the American railroad immediately. But the chief refused without Mayr's approval.

Upon the Master Spy's decision hinged the fate of his conspiracy and perhaps of Iran itself. Most men would have told the Khan to unleash his desert riders, cut the artery that pumped into Russia's battered body the American-British blood she needed to fight back. That would be a blow to Allied hopes worthy even a Master Spy! But Mayr had got beyond that. Under the stress of hunted, haunted days and nights of intriguing, to his fanatical faith in Hitler had been added an equally fanatical faith in himself and his great design, which had become his great obsession.

Surely, he now believed, the almighty Reichswehr would still come to Iran. It would overrun the country, yes; then it would press on toward India. To move its victorious legions and their gear it would need that railroad, intact. He would save it for them. He would not let it be destroyed, no matter what some fool in the Berlin office said. For that the German generals would thank him, Franz Mayr; they and the *Fuehrer*. They would richly reward him, might even make him the power behind the throne of Iran. No, the Khan must not wreck the railroad. Mayr disowned Schultze, who returned to Germany, where later American agents found him, descended to a job of rubber-stamping passports.

Mayr hurried preparations for his *coup*. With the newly arrived funds, he bought increasing quantities of information, which his radiomen sent nightly to the Reichswehr and on to Berlin. He prepared a large landing field to receive Nazi planes. He honeycombed the Iranian Army. Ready to welcome the Reichswehr, he had four Persian generals, twenty colonels and many lesser officers and troops. Behind them were an amazing number of government officials, including men in key positions. He now had many creatures among trusted employees of the American-owned railroad, including important executives who were supplying him with much information about its shipments to Russia, and at a given signal might, indeed, take over operation.

But the Reichswehr was still stalled in the Caucasus; and the Russians, nourished in strength by Allied supplies borne mainly by the American railroad through Iran, were sometimes counterattacking. Berlin desperately radioed Mayr to unleash the desert tribes against the railroad immediately. All of which, Allied Counter Intelligence picked out of the air. Mayr now had urgent orders to forget his great design and cut the Red Army's life-artery. Clearly, it was high time for us to break up the plot and round up the plotters.

American C.I.C., which had been quietly spotting and listing the treacherous railroad officials, arrested nearly fifty in Tehran alone. The British bagged another hundred and more conspirators, spies and potential saboteurs of high and low degree. All were interned in Sultanabad. The facts of the Nazi intrigue against his régime were laid before the Shah, and helped to decide him to declare war on Hitler, which he did.

British and American Counter Intelligence officers were decorated for their Iranian service. The souvenir Schroeder got out of it was Dickehaut's pistol. The booby prize, however, went to an American G.I. who, after the round-up was over, came to C.I.C. red-faced, and apologized.

"I guess I should have told you months ago about Mayr and his plots and where he was hiding. That gal told me all about it, but I thought it was movie stuff she dreamed up."

"What gal?"

"Why, Lalla, who hid him when he was here in Tehran. When he wasn't around—well, she and I were kinda—*that* way."

Today in a prison camp in Eritrea bides a stoop-shouldered man who is acquiring the air of a quiet little professor. Franz Mayr still marvels that, instead of the Reichswehr coming to Iran and taking over the railroad, that railroad remained firmly American and never ceased delivering to the Red Army the supplies that were vital to its victory. The one-time Master Spy does not yet understand that because he just would keep a diary and a mistress, and confide in both, and say *"Pfui!"* to the American spy-hunters, his great design was toppled like a house of cards by the Yankee trick that was turned that moonlit night in Tehran.

BUT the Russians understand what was the score in Iran—and still is. They well know that if a few years ago, oil and railroad were of great value to Allied defense against Nazi tyranny, so would they be today against Communist tyranny. Also, that they would be even more valuable to Communist tyranny in the aggression in the Middle East that it plainly contemplates. Today in preparation, the Russian stooge-party called "Tudeh" is honeycombing Iran. Its undercover network is so extensive that when Moscow orders, it can probably carry out Mayr's great design. But now our State Department frowns on kidnapings—and inasmuch as the C.I.C. goes only where the Army goes, and inasmuch as our Army is no longer in Iran, so the C.I.C. is no longer there either.

The Ram with Great Horns

"SHORTY," SAID LAYDELL TO THE GUIDE AFTERWARD, "IF YOU EVER BREATHE A WORD ABOUT THIS TO ANYBODY, I PROMISE PERSONALLY TO BREAK YOUR NECK."

by JIM KJELGAARD

I'VE heard it before, my friend. Whether it's good or bad, the basic, elemental stuff, the raw material that really holds a man together, shows up on the trail. You know a man only after you've shared his campfire. My opinion is, well—

Let me tell you about the time I took George Laydell and his son Stanley to hunt the ram with great horns.

I've been a professional guide for thirty years. Among the men I've guided are many whose names are well-known; I've been out with business men, politicians, professional people and outlaws. Therefore I was not particularly overwhelmed when George Laydell engaged me by letter.

Of course I knew who he was; I read the daily papers and national magazines. George Laydell, immigrant boy who founded and controls Laydell Enterprises. One of the most spectacular careers of our generation; but I have known many other famous men.

I had formed no opinion of George Laydell when I drove my car to the airport to meet him. His letter? If it had been signed John Smith, I would have considered it a courteous, efficient missive. I refused to let myself be dazzled by a name, but I had not met George Laydell.

I did not have to meet him in order to know him. Five people left the

plane at our airport, but if there had been five hundred, George Laydell would have been the one to stand out. It was not his physical appearance that marked him, for he was a slight and graying man like ten thousand others. Rather, it was an air that he carried with him. It proclaimed, before this man said a word, that he was in absolute control of everything. Regardless of what it might be, no other man on earth could do it as well. He was all-powerful.

Almost at the same moment I saw him, he saw me. And in some strange way he knew who I was, for he hurried to me and thrust out his hand.

"Mr. Grayson?"

"I'm Hub Grayson."

"I'm George Laydell," he said, "and I want you to meet my son Stanley."

I decided at that instant that George Laydell owned or controlled nothing more completely than he did his son.

I do not make a habit of inquiring into my clients' personal affairs. Neither do I make a habit of prying into the intimate home life of a grizzly, but grizzly tracks in fresh snow are there for anyone who wants to read their story. And a man cannot hide the relations existing between himself and his son any more than a grizzly can hide its tracks.

It was so easy to see. Stanley Laydell was a clean-cut, intelligent youngster of about nineteen. But all his life he had been a prisoner of the magic brewed by his father. He was entangled as hopelessly as any fly that blunders into a spider's web, and he could not help himself. Born to a normal father, Stanley might have been anything he wished to be. The son of George Laydell, he was a sounding-board that echoed whatever notes his father struck.

I still made it none of my business. George Laydell had engaged me to take him on a sheep hunt, and not to dictate his personal thoughts. I'd better add that he came to me solely because one of my previous clients, a man named McMurray, had seen an extraordinarily large ram, a beast with great horns, in the Glacier Lake country, and he had told George Laydell. My only business was to take him and his son to Glacier Lake, and to guide one or the other afterward.

The other guide was Shorty Manton. We had a cook, Pete Henderson, and an Indian kid named Butch was going along to wrangle horses.

The next morning we started for Glacier Lake.

I have guided many men on many sheep hunts, and their reactions are as varied as the men themselves. Some just don't care whether they get anything or even see anything; it's enough for them simply to go. Some are satisfied with any sort of trophy, and some earnestly hunt only big heads. Until this trip, I had never guided anybody exactly like George Laydell.

I can assure you that it isn't a simple matter to hunt sheep. They're wary, and wild. It takes a lot of hunting to get near one, and frequently only a very good shot can bring one down even after he is in range. You overcome a lot of obstacles before you get your trophy; but George Laydell is the first man I ever guided who had concluded, even before he started out, that he was not merely going to get a sheep. He was going to kill the sheep he wanted, the ram with great horns.

Nothing I could say would change this attitude, and I am certain that the thought of failure never crossed his mind. He had set out to do something. Because he was George Laydell, it was a foregone conclusion that he would do it.

The man's personality, intellect, or whatever you call it, was overwhelming. He was so certain of himself that I found myself unable to question him. So did Shorty. Both of us knew he would kill the ram with great horns.

None knew it better than Stanley.

At the suggestion of George Laydell, Shorty and I were dividing our time. I guided the father for two days, then Shorty took over while I guided Stanley. I've never seen a more spiritless hunter.

He was perfectly willing to climb, and to be careful, and to do all the hard work one must do if he would hunt in the sheep pastures; but he did so because that was expected of him. What was the use of anyone else's hunting the ram with great horns when George Laydell was hunting it? To Stanley's certain knowledge, never in his life had his father been bested, and he never would be. I could not blame the boy too much, for by this time I felt the same way. But I still did my best.

Perhaps, therefore, something besides luck was with us when, on the eleventh day of our hunt, in a craggy meadow high above Glacier Lake, Stanley Laydell and I came to within one hundred yards of the ram with great horns. He was a magnificent beast, the biggest I have ever seen; and when we saw him, he was running slowly. I believe Stanley's reactions were automatic. He raised his rifle, sighted, and dropped the ram squarely in its tracks.

Then the boy seemed to go into a trance. It must have been a bewildering and almost a shocking thing. By every precept he knew, his father should have killed the ram. But *he* had killed it; the trophy was his alone. Stanley did not say a word as I skinned out the head and cape, and he only murmured while we were walking back down the mountain. Campfire smoke told me that Shorty and George had come in.

I sensed the tremulous excitement that rose within Stanley, and the great tension under which he labored. Shorty and George Laydell eyed us as we came in to camp. I put the great ram's head on the ground and stepped back. Stanley had halted a few paces behind me, and there was a grin on his lips.

Only it was no longer the grin of a man who must forever rest in his father's shadow. There in the heights Stanley Laydell had finally found himself. He had discovered a great truth without which he never could have hoped for a happy and normal life of his own. George Laydell was his father, someone to be loved and revered. He was not a god. At last someone else had done better than he could. The bond remained between father and son, but it was no longer a strangling bond. Stanley had become a man in his own right.

I thought I could sense the astonishment, the inward shock, which George Laydell knew. I saw chagrin and a little resentment written on his face, because for the first time in his life someone had surpassed him. Then his better instincts triumphed. He stepped forward, shook Stanley's hand, and said:

"Congratulations, son."

There you are, a perfect illustration. A sheep hunt had put a spotlight on the souls of two men. It had brought to the surface all the latent manliness in Stanley. It had proven to Stanley's father that, after all, there is no superman. He might do a little more worrying after this, but I thought he'd be a little more human. I believed that, right up to the time I returned from taking George Laydell and his son back to the airport. Shorty Manton was sitting on the top rail of the corral, whittling.

"Queer duck, wasn't he?" Shorty asked.

"Nothing unusual," I said. "He fits a pattern. It just knocked him for a loop when the kid took the ram right out from under his nose."

"Oh, no," said Shorty.

"What do you mean?"

"Day before the kid brought that ram in," Shorty said, "I had the old man within fifty yards of him. Kept waitin' for him to shoot, but all he done was stand still until the ram run away. Then he looked me square in the eye and says:

"Shorty, if you ever breathe a word about this to anybody at all, I promise personally to break your damn' neck!"

Paul Revere—Man

(Continued from inside front cover:)

THE campaign to Crown Point proved only a summer outing for the Massachusetts militia. Young Paul, the wagoners and artillerymen camped in idleness for six months on the breezy shores of Lake Champlain, and returned home without ever seeing an Iroquois savage or a French dragoon.

Paul went back to work, and to squiring Sarah Orne, a delicately beautiful girl whom he married sometime in August of 1757. Sarah Orne Revere bore him a son and seven daughters, dying on May 3, 1773, while still a young woman, worn out from endless childbearing. Only five months later her husband, who was above all things a family man and found widowerhood intolerable, married Rachel Walker of Boston, with whom he was to live happily for forty-two years, and who also was to bear him eight children.

Like the other artisans and mechanics of Boston in the 1760's, young Revere was a radical in politics. By the time he had finished his apprenticeship, he was active in both the Masonic order and the Sons of Liberty, two organizations which furnished the hard core of American resistance in Massachusetts before the outbreak of actual war. At the Green Dragon Inn on Boston's North Side, the Sons of Liberty foregathered to plot sedition and to concoct the pamphlets and "broadsides"—political cartoons—of the day, with which to needle the British and arouse the people of the Massachusetts Colony to defiance of the Crown. They were a burly and pugnacious lot, these Sons of Liberty, and young Paul Revere, a square-set, heavy-fisted youth with a rather cherubic face and cocky expression, was a leader among them. Soon they would be fighting the British, but in the meantime most any antagonist would do, as the records of the time testify.

On one occasion, several years after his marriage to Sarah Orne, Revere got into a tavern fracas with one Thomas Fosdick, as a result of which he was haled before a justice of the peace on a charge of "assault and beating." It was noted on the record that "Defendant pleads not guilty, but after a full hearing it appears that he is guilty." The court fined Paul Revere six shillings and seven pence, and put him under a bond of ten pounds to keep the peace. The bond was posted by Joshua Brackett, a coppersmith, and Nathaniel Fosdick, a cousin of Thomas', who apparently thought Thomas got what was coming to him.

There can be little doubt of the dressing-down Paul Revere received when he got home. Mrs. Revere was furious; and the talking-to she gave him must have been a good one, because never again, in all his long life, was Paul Revere guilty of losing his temper save in a good cause.

HE was having other troubles by now. Though he worked as hard as any man who ever lived—more than five hundred pieces of his gold and silver craftsmanship have come down to us—Paul Revere was hard put to it to support his growing family. Boston was in the throes of a depression which was to last, in all, for twenty years—from the beginning of the quarrels with England in 1764 until long after the end of the American Revolution.

Silver plate was a luxury of the well-to-do; and furthermore, it was intimately associated with the drinking of tea. Bostonians had sworn off tea (except that which was smuggled) and taken to rum, as a patriotic gesture, because of the tax; and for other reasons business in general was so bad that even the wealthy merchants cut down their purchases of silverware.

Paul was forced to install a number of sidelines to keep his business and his family solvent, and he approached the problem with a rare blend of artistic temperament and Yankee ingenuity. Though he was little more than an unschooled mechanic, he began to design and execute book-plates, engravings, and magazine illustrations, as well as political cartoons. Among his engravings are the famous "Views of Boston," including one of Harvard, and a few portraits, the latter not notably successful from an artistic standpoint. One of these was the portrait of his old friend the Rev. Jonathan Mayhew, which was used as a frontispiece to a volume of sermons. He also decided to practice dentistry, and by the standards of the day, did so successfully.

Illustrated by
JOHN FULTON

A dentist in his neighborhood had moved away; that was enough for Paul Revere. On September 19, 1768, he inserted an advertisement in the Boston *Gazette* addressed to "persons so unfortunate as to lose their foreteeth," which stated that "all such . . . may have them replaced by artificial ones that looks as well as the natural and answers the end of speaking to all intents, by Paul Revere, Goldsmith, near the head of Clarke's Wharf, Boston."

Missing front teeth must have been a common occurrence in rebellious Boston, because two years later Paul placed another advertisement in the same journal returning his sincere "Thanks to the Gentlemen and Ladies who have employed him in the care of their Teeth," and advising them that "he still continues the business of a Dentist, and flatters himself that from the experience he has had these two years (in which he has fixt some hundreds of teeth) that he can fix them as well as any surgeon dentist who ever came from London."

One of the most famous anecdotes concerning Paul Revere's versatility as an artisan and mechanic concerns the bill he is supposed to have sent to a customer, charging him for fixing his teeth and shoeing his horse.

That he had learned his work well is also attested by the fact that after the British troops evacuated Boston in 1776, Revere was called upon to identify the body of General Joseph Warren, the beloved physician of Boston who fell at Bunker Hill, by its teeth, when Warren's body was removed from the battlefield to a resting-place in the Old Granary Burial Ground in Boston.

There is also the legend that when General Washington arrived in Boston, Paul Revere did some dental work on the General's famous choppers; but there is no factual record of this.

IN his cartoons Paul Revere combined business with pleasure and politics. Some he originated and some he merely reproduced, but nearly all were savage lampoons of British rule. Revere turned out many famous ones. One is the engraving entitled "A Warm Place—Hell," showing members of the Massachusetts General Court being led by a British bellwether to the lower regions. It was

of the People

WE ALL KNOW ABOUT HIS FAMOUS RIDE. BUT HIS LIFE INCLUDED MANY OTHER DRAMATIC EPISODES WELL WORTH RECALLING.

by D. C. O'FLAHERTY

To his chiefs in the Clark parlor Paul Revere delivered a crisp military appraisal of the situation.

occasioned by the Court's decision in ordering the Massachusetts Assembly to rescind its appeal to the other Colonies to join in establishing committees of grievance against Britain. Another is his famous scene of the "Boston Massacre."

When the royal governor in 1768 asked that British troops be sent from Halifax to maintain order in obstreperous Boston, Paul Revere was among the lounging Sons of Liberty who scowled at the debarking troops. But Paul Revere did more than scowl. He hastened back to his engraving tools and produced his famous copperplate print entitled *"A View of Part of the Town of Boston in New England, and British Troops Landing in the Year 1768. Dedicated to the Earl of Hillsborough."*

This would have been well enough, except that Revere added a nose-thumbing caption in the form of a dedication. It read:

"To the Earl of Hillsborough, His Majesty's Secretary of State For America, THIS VIEW of the only well plan'd Expedition formed for supporting ye dignity of BRITAIN & Chastising ye insolence of America is humbly inscribed."

Revere also jotted down a description of the landing.

"On Friday, September 30, 1768," he wrote, "the ships of war arrived, schooners transports etc. came up the harbour and anchored around the town; their cannons loaded, a spring on their cables, as for a regular siege. At noon Saturday the fourteenth and twenty-ninth regiments and a detachment from the 59th regiment and a train of artillery landed on the Long Wharf; there formed and marched with insolent parade, drums beating, fifes playing, up King Street, each soldier having received sixteen rounds of powder and ball." The business-like Revere also noted the names of the ships: *Beaver, Senegal, Martin, Glasgow, Mermaid, Romney, Launceston* and *Bonetta.*

These troops had been sent in response to a desperate request by the Governor "to rescue the Government out of the hands of a trained mob and restore the activity of the Civil Power."

Things were indeed out of hand. John Hancock and Sam Adams, the patriot leaders, and the Sons of Liberty, were in the saddle; Boston was openly defying the laws and terrorizing the King's representatives.

On the day of the landing, however, the mob showed that it was better trained than the Governor had supposed. Although all Boston had turned out at the dock, in sullen formation, there was none of the expected rioting. John Hancock and Sam Adams had seen to that.

The fighting cry of the tradesmen of Boston, "Turn Out, Town Born!" was not heard. Only the schoolboys hurled insults at the British, shouting, "Look at the bloody lobsterbacks! Any lobsters for sale?"

The Sons of Liberty savagely bided their time, Paul Revere among them. He was as busy as ever, however; even busier. In addition to his work in metals, he was shoeing horses, mak-

"In Medford," he says, "I awaked the captain of the Minute Men, and after that I alarmed almost every house."

ing picture-frames, fixing teeth, making maps, engraving portraits, and producing water colors. Indeed, if the blood of his New England pioneer ancestors on one side, and his Huguenot forebears on the other, had not been running hot in his veins, Paul Revere might have had little complaint concerning the British occupation of Boston. He was thirty-nine years old, moreover, and he had a large family. Time for a man to settle down and make provision for his old age.

One may see the reason why he did not do so in the portrait of him painted about this time by John Singleton Copley, the famous New England artist. The face is still cherubic, and there is a hint of a smile about the lips; but one eyebrow is lifted quizzically, and the black eyes flash the warning *"Don't Tread on Me"* as plainly as any rattlesnake banner in New England.

THE storm was gathering, and the men of Massachusetts knew that soon they must call upon their brother colonists in New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia to take up arms and fight with them in the field.

They would need a trusted liaison officer for the work, a man who could make fifty miles a day on the same mount, and who could not be overtaken, trapped or halted by storm and flood. Paul Revere was their man.

In March, 1770, occurred the famous "Boston Massacre," which Paul Revere made the subject of his most famous cartoon. Actually it was a street fight between seven soldiers, under the command of a Captain Preston, and a mob of fifty or sixty men and boys who pelted the "lobster-backs" with snowballs and insults. One of them wielded a club. Whether or not by order of Captain Preston, the soldiers fired into the crowd. Seven persons were wounded, two of them mortally.

The news spread rapidly, and an indignation meeting was called in the Old South Meeting House next morning at eleven o'clock, as a result of which Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson ordered the British regiments back into barracks at Castle William, to avoid further trouble.

At daybreak, Paul Revere had hurried to the scene of the "Massacre," where he made a pen-and-ink sketch of the neighborhood. By nightfall he was at work on a plate entitled: *"The Bloody Fruits of Arbitrary Power; or the Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street, Boston, by a party of the XXIXth Regiment Etc."*

In 1773, the Americans having refused to pay a tax, however small, on tea—a tax which had been imposed on them without their consent—the East India Company conceived the idea of unloading a surplus stock of seventeen million pounds of tea in America at prices lower than the Americans were paying for the smuggled article. Accordingly, tea ships set sail for Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Charleston. Instantly Boston, as well as the other cities, was in an uproar.

ANOTHER mass meeting, headed by Sam Adams, demanded that the Lieutenant Governor send the tea ships packing. When he refused, a band of Bostonians, most of them Liberty Boys, smeared their faces with soot, donned Indian war bonnets, and boarded the tea ship *Dartmouth* at Griffin's Wharf, in the dead of night. With realistic war-whoops, they dumped the tea into the harbor, and returned home for patriotic celebrations which lasted far into the winter night. Paul Revere was a ringleader of the group.

Sam Adams, however, realized that the single gesture of defiance, however laudable, would accomplish nothing without the coöperation of the patriots in the other colonies, particularly in New York. In his capacity as

a member of the Committee of Correspondence, he summoned Paul Revere to discuss the situation.

Master Revere, with fire in his eye, could be off for New York the same day, with a message for the New York patriots in his saddlebags. As a horseman he had no reputation; indeed, as one of the "town born," he had probably never been out of Boston in his life, save for the ride on the artillery wagons to Lake Champlain. But Sam Adams did not ask about his horsemanship. He asked him to go to New York. Whether Revere had his own horse, or whether he hired one, is not a matter of record, but it is a matter of record that he pushed his steed some fifty miles a day over back-country roads and streams which must have been frozen and rutted with winter.

In New York he conferred with John Lamb, head of the Liberty Boys, and according to a Boston diarist, "the news of the destruction of the tea gave great satisfaction to all friends of liberty." The mission to New York was a success. Governor Tryon, under pressure from the patriots, agreed to turn back any tea ships that might put into New York harbor. Revere returned to Boston.

He was more than a hero now; he was admitted, along with other Sons of Liberty, into the inner councils of the Committee of Correspondence, where hitherto only such men as Adams and Hancock had sat. To Revere must go the credit for breaking down the barriers which had kept the Sons of Liberty high privates in the rear ranks. From now on the artisan and the mechanic would march on an equal footing with the merchants, the shipbuilders and the aristocrats in the struggle for American freedom.

The ride to New York, although it was the most arduous Paul Revere ever undertook, was only a trial heat for the famous "Midnight Ride" celebrated in Longfellow's poem.

The crisis had come; the British really cracked down this time. They closed the Port of Boston. For Boston it meant starvation, and for the American Colonies it meant Revolution.

Under the direction of the Committee of Public Safety, which by now was the real government of Massachusetts, the patriots began to hoard powder and shot, muskets and a few field guns for the coming conflict. The chief arsenal was at Concord. Incredible as it may seem, General Gage's intelligence service (if he had any worth the name) did not inform him of what was going on until after the arsenal had been assembled; the spies of the rebels, on the other hand, now headed by Paul Revere, were to know every move the British would make.

By Sunday morning, April 16, 1775, Paul Revere's intelligence service had brought in enough evidence to convince him and Dr. Joseph Warren that the British were about to move on Concord with some eight hundred troops to seize the arsenal. General Gage had also received peremptory orders from London to arrest John Hancock and Sam Adams on charges of high treason. Paul Revere realized that a showdown was imminent, and he saddled his horse for a ride to Lexington, where Hancock and Adams had their headquarters.

The information he brought to Lexington was startling enough for Hancock and Adams to order the dispersal of the arms at Concord at once. Between Sunday and Tuesday night the military stores were all swiftly and efficiently scattered to new hiding places in Groton, Lancaster, Leicester, Mendon, Worcester and Stow. The minute men of thirty Massachusetts communities were also to be alerted in case the British "came out." That was Paul Revere's responsibility.

His Sunday mission accomplished, Paul jogged back to Charlestown, just across the river from Boston. The preparations which the King's troops were making left him in the dark on one point: whether Gage's expedition to Concord intended to move by land or water.

It would be of the utmost importance to the Minute Men along the road to Concord and Lexington to know which way the British were coming, when they did. Consequently, Paul Revere halted in Charlestown on his way back from Lexington, and made the famous arrangements for the lanterns in the tower, which Longfellow has made familiar in the phrase "one if by land and two if by sea."

Not until the very night of the march (April 19, 1775) could the plans of the British be learned, even by Revere's efficient spies. Then events moved swiftly. A patrol of British officers appeared in the streets of Cambridge. It was a windy, clear April night. Shortly after the appearance of the officers, a British force composed of grenadiers and light infantry moved from their barracks to the lower end of Boston Common. The point where they assembled is now the intersection of Charles and Boylston Streets. There could be no mistaking the fact that the troops were in full field kit, and were preparing to leave Boston by boat to the Charlestown-Cambridge shore. So it was to be by land, and not by sea.

The news spread through Boston like a brush fire, and Dr. Joseph Warren sent posthaste for Paul Revere. It was ten o'clock in the evening, and the wind-whipped waves of the Charles River were slapping at the sides of the British boats. Revere must cross the river ahead of them, mount his horse and ride to alarm the countryside.

Because of the regulation which closed the river to small-boat traffic at nine o'clock, he would be risking death by gunfire, either from the shore patrols or from the decks of the *Somerset:* but the risk must be taken. A single lantern must also be hoisted into the steeple of the Old North Church in Boston, on the Charlestown side.

There has been some dispute as to who actually raised the lantern in the Old North Church. Robert Newman, the sexton, undoubtedly had a hand in it; the British tried him later on the charge and acquitted him for lack of evidence. The descendants of John Pulling, Esq., a member of the Committee of Public Safety, have contended that it was Pulling whom Revere directed to give the signal.

Revere's own statement is not explicit on this point. Of his activities that night, he wrote:

> *"I left Dr. Warren, called upon a friend and desired him to make the signal; for we were apprehensive it would be difficult to cross the Charles River, a little to the eastward where the* Somerset *lay. It was then young flood; the ship was winding, and the moon was rising. I then went home, took my boots and surtout, went to the north part of town, where I kept a boat. Two friends rowed me across the Charles River. They landed me on the Charlestown side. When I got into town, I met Colonel Conant and several others. They said they had seen our signals."*

Paul Revere is now upon the Charlestown shore; and now he is to begin his gallop across the pages of history. He must have a horse; it is supplied by John Larkin, one of the wealthiest citizens of Charlestown. Years afterward Revere wrote that the horse was "very good." And well he might remember his mount with affection, because on the stout heart of the animal depended not only his own safety, but that of his comrades and of his commanders, John Hancock and Sam Adams, as well. The British were already readying a gallows at Tyburn for that doughty pair.

In addition to carrying the word to Hancock and Adams at Lexington, Revere must interrupt his ride at "every Middlesex Village and Farm" to warn the Minute Men that the redcoats were on the march.

It would have been a hard ride even if there had been no British in his path; as it turned out, he narrow-

They ran head-on into a British patrol which commanded them to dismount. There was nothing to do but obey.

ly escaped capture. Just as he was passing the site of a gallows tree where a Negro slave had been hanged in chains for murder, two British officers on horseback blocked his path. Revere was unarmed: there was no time to parley. He wheeled his horse around and rode back in the direction whence he had come, the British officers in hot pursuit. One of them came close enough to seize his bridle. Revere dodged into a crossroad, and under cover of darkness, distanced his pursuers.

He now had to travel a back road to Lexington, through Medford; and "in Medford," he says, "I awaked the captain of the Minute Men, and after that I alarmed almost every house until I got to Lexington," a distance of twelve miles. It was an armed and angry countryside that Revere left behind him before he reported to his superiors, John Hancock and Sam Adams, in Lexington.

The two patriot leaders were staying at the house of a man named Clark. Their only protection was a sergeant on guard, named Monroe, who cannot have been the brightest fellow in the world, because he admonished Revere not to make so much noise: Hancock and Adams were asleep and did not wish to be disturbed.

Revere must have exploded into some Green Dragon language. At least part of what he said was: "You'll have noise enough before long. The Regulars are coming."

To his chiefs by candlelight in the Clark parlor Paul Revere delivered a crisp military appraisal of the situation, quoting his superior, Joseph Warren, as authority for the message.

The ride was not over. In the conversation at the Clark house, it came out that nobody was certain whether a message had been sent to Concord concerning the British plans. Although both he and his horse were nearly spent, Revere insisted that he would ride another six miles at top speed to Concord.

It was one o'clock in the morning when he set out, but the countryside was noisy with church-bells ringing the alarm, and the hilltops burned with signal fires. With Revere was William Dawes, another Committee courier who had taken a different route, and very shortly they were joined by young Dr. Samuel Prescott of Concord, who had been paying a visit to his sweetheart in Lexington.

When the trio reached the village of Lincoln, they ran head-on into a British patrol. A volley of musketry commanded them to halt and dismount. Being unarmed, there was nothing to do but obey. At this juncture, however, young Dr. Prescott proved himself worthy of the company in which he found himself that morning. He whispered to Revere to make a bolt in one direction, while he made a dash in the other; and in the resultant confusion Prescott vaulted into the saddle again and escaped in the direction of Concord.

Revere was not so lucky. He was out of reach of his horse, and trapped. But when the British officer asked him his name, he gave it readily, though it was well known as that of the head of all the Yankee spies in Boston.

"They abused me much," says Revere curtly in his account of what happened next.

The officer in charge, however, ordered his men to be silent, and told Revere that the patriots were mistaken, that there was no march on Concord and that the British patrols were out merely looking for deserters.

"I know better," snapped Revere. "Five hundred Americans will be here in a short time; and I may tell you, sir, that your troops are catched aground in passing the river. I've alarmed the country all the way up."

These words, or words very similar to them, were spoken by Paul Revere with a real pistol at his head, and a figurative halter, none the less real, around his neck. He was an obstinate Yankee.

Revere's audacity had the effect of diverting the Britisher's attention from himself. If the Yankee mechanic was telling the truth, the British officer argued, it would be well to inform his superior, a Major Mitchell, and quit

the neighborhood at once. This he did, but by now the sound of firing could be heard in the direction of Lexington. The Battle of Lexington had begun. Major Mitchell regarded his collection of country bumpkins with a jaundiced eye. (He had picked up four other stragglers in his night's foraging, in addition to Dawes and Revere.) They would be nothing but a burden now. Impatiently he ordered them to follow his men on foot in the direction of Lexington. Revere was ordered to surrender his horse to a sergeant; and so a British non-com rode to the Battle of Lexington on Paul Revere's horse.

As for Revere, he made use of the skill he had acquired as an espionage agent in the narrow alleys of Boston; he did a disappearing act. Before the British knew what had happened, as they took up the march to Lexington, Revere slipped off into the darkness and eventually found his way back to the Clark house. There he found once more that his night's work was not done. John Hancock's secretary informed him that Hancock, in a hurry, had left a trunk behind containing papers valuable to the patriot cause. Dismounted and footsore as he was, Paul Revere trudged two miles back to Lexington with the secretary, to the tavern where Hancock had left the trunk.

"There was a continuous roar of musketry," Revere wrote, "as we made off with the Trunk."

It was typical of Paul Revere, who wanted to join the Minute Men of Lexington, that he gave up a chance to earn glory on the battlefield, and inscribe his name on the rolls of the Minute Men forever, in order to perform a prosaic duty which he was convinced was of greater importance to the cause.

It surely could have been expected that one who had performed such signal service to his country would have been rewarded with recognition and a handsome commission; after all, Paul Revere had been an artilleryman as well as head of the Intelligence Service in Boston, and he was well qualified for such an honor.

But Revere was now to experience something that many a patriot before and since has experienced: the ingratitude of republics. For some reason, he was passed over when the commissions and the fancy regimentals were handed out. After Concord, he remained merely the official courier of the Committee of Safety, and he appears to have felt some natural resentment, for he put in an expense account for his ride! And to cap the ironic climax, the auditors of the Committee of Public Safety found it too high. They accordingly reduced it from eleven shillings and ten pence (it included one item for printing Continental currency) to four shillings a day for his services.

Despite the cavalier treatment he received at the hands of men who should have given him preferment, nothing could alter Revere's devotion to the patriot cause. He loved Boston and New England with all his soul; he would do his duty no matter how dull. He accepted a commission as a major in the home guard in 1776 and served with the Massachusetts Artillery Train.

The following year he was ordered to Worcester, Massachusetts, to take charge of some Hessian prisoners who had been captured at the Battle of Bennington. In 1778 the Massachusetts militia were again called into service for a projected attack on the British at Newport; but this venture was called off because the French general, D'Estaing, felt that his fleet, damaged in the great storm of August that year, was not in a position to support the Rhode Island bastion. In 1779, another ill-fated expedition —one against the British at Penobscot, Maine—called Revere into service.

American arms were not covered with glory at Penobscot, to say the least, and the ill luck which had pursued Revere since Concord pursued him still. The militia he commanded proved to be the sorriest of soldiers, who "skulked out of the way, and concealed" at "any alarm on any special occasion." When General Lovell, commander of the expedition, finally engaged the British, he was lacking the sea support of Commodore Dudley Saltonstall, who was subsequently threatened with court-martial; and the British won an easy victory, though they were few in numbers and occupied a position which should have been untenable.

Ugly charges were brought against Paul Revere. He was accused of disobeying orders of his superiors, "unsoldierlike behavior" and leaving his men "to dispurce and takeing no manner of care of them." The truth seems to be that when his vagabond militia melted away, Revere no longer had a command to hurl at the enemy, and so he returned home, some weeks ahead of General Lovell. His disgust with the whole proceedings was patent. Nevertheless he was placed under arrest and tried by "a committee of inquiry." This committee gave a half-hearted verdict which left the question of Revere's guilt in doubt. Furious, he demanded, and got, a military trial at which he was exonerated. . . .

The war was over, eventually, but victory found both Boston and Paul Revere in bad shape. The town's trade had been killed by the war. Revere had subsisted during the war by operating a powder-mill for the Continentals at Canton, and printing Continental currency, but the profits had been small.

He was forty-five years old, now, and broke. With characteristic energy, however, he plunged again into the silversmith's trade, and some of his greatest work in silver dates from this period. Finally he established a foundry which was to turn out church bells, ship's bells, brass cannon, ship's fittings, stoves, chimney backs, hearths, anvils, forge hammers, and all manner of articles.

Always a believer in advertising, Revere engraved his own business card and distributed it. It showed an American spread eagle and bore this announcement:

PAUL REVERE AND SON
AT THEIR BELL AND CANNON FOUNDRY
IN THE NORTH PART OF BOSTON
CAST BELLS AND CANNON OF ALL SIZES
AND ALL KINDS OF COMPOSITION WORK,
MANUFACTURE SHEETS, BOLTS, SPIKES,
NAILS &C FROM MALLEABLE COPPER AND
COLD ROLLED.
N. B. CASH FOR OLD BRASS AND COPPER

Paul Revere's foundry and copper-rolling mill were to make him a rich man. Throughout New England and Virginia the church belfries were filled with bells cast in his foundry; the ship's bells which sounded throughout the Seven Seas during the Golden Age of the Yankee Clippers were of Paul Revere's design; he virtually built the frigate *Constitution* (Old Ironsides), except for the wooden frame; he roofed the Boston State House and the New York City Hall in copper; and he supplied the plate for the boilers of Robert Fulton's second steamboat on the Hudson.

He built Rachel a fine house, and in his old age he was easily the most beloved citizen of Boston. He held public office, being first President of the Boston Board of Public Health, and was interested in Masonic and charitable affairs. He was a familiar figure in Boston in the morning time of the Republic—at the Merchants Club, on the Exchange—a legend in the flesh, but solid, substantial flesh.

In the war of 1814, when he was nearly eighty, British warships hove menacingly close to American shores again, and the first man to volunteer as a "sea-fencible" was Paul Revere. But his services were no longer needed. The Republic he had helped to build was strong, proud and indestructible—as he himself had been in his youth. Paul Revere died on May 10, 1818, on a bright Sunday morning, with the church bells of New England, which had been cast in his own foundry, ringing out his requiem.

The Damning Dust

WITH THE SKILL OF A BLACKFELLOW TRACKER, A QUEENSLAND POLICE SERGEANT FOLLOWS A SUBTLE TRAIL OF MURDER TO ITS GRIM CONCLUSION.

POLICE SERGEANT THOMAS WELLMAN walked slowly, leading his borrowed horse beside the red dust of the sheep pad, while the horse expressed its annoyance at being compelled to walk in the grass rather than on the pad. Above the Sergeant's huge figure in his uniform with its tans faded by much sun and many washings, the Queensland sky was violently blue at the zenith and toned sharply to lighter blue at the horizons. Frost had dried the four-foot-high kangaroo grass to pale gold that deepened to orange where the coarse seed-heads met the stiff and jointed stalks, and on the ironstone ridges the stands of belated hop blazed crimson. Where the Sergeant's body caught the early sun, it was pleasantly warm, but where his body was in shadow, it was still cold with the memory of frost. And in the morning that rang with bird-songs the sense that something was terribly wrong seemed absurd.

Tragedy and loss were here, but why his persisting inability to believe the story the evidence presented? Was it just that the dead man had been his friend and that grief could not accept impersonal and unpunishable chance as culprit? He did not think so. Assumably the accident had happened—but it should not have happened. He simply could not see the thing happening as it had seemingly happened.

The past night had been the worst of his life, but his large and battered red face was neatly shaven, and his romantically uptilted felt hat was set correctly on his close-cropped and slightly grizzled dark hair. And dropping now to one knee to scan more closely the trail's junction with the larger pad that came in from the east, he looked what he was, a rather slow, very neat and very honest man. That he was also one of the greatest bushmen in a land of great bushmen, and that he was also capable of tremendous physical bravery, was less obvious. But it was said by Australians that while a good black tracker could out-trail the average white man by a hundred to one, a truly great white tracker could out-trail an Aborigine, and that the Sergeant was one of these rare exceptions. And while he never wore it, the Empire's highest decoration for courage in battle, the Victoria Cross, was carefully put away with his few personal possessions at the police station. Even more privately, he held an implicit faith in a sternly just and simple God by Whose clear and simple commandments a man should try to live. His service to his God was the exacting performance of his duty—an infinite care to be right—which prompted his present minute study of the dust-page before him.

Tying the old horse to the fence, he began to walk carefully beside the pad from the east, for it was here that the story of building tragedy of accident was written in the dust under such glory of light that the thought of murder seemed fantastically improbable. Yet, if he was honest about it, he was even thinking of a definite man as perhaps a murderer. He was no more satisfied about the nature of John Williams' death than he had been last night. Everything seemed plain enough; yet John had been a sensible man, and the accident was not one that should have happened to a sensible man with a loved wife and child to live for. It was out of character—and the Sergeant had great faith in character.

TRUE, big and fair-haired John had not yet been twenty-one, but he had been mature in mind, not a senseless kid who would lose his head. He had been working the twenty-thousand-acre selection carefully and well for the past three years; for the first year, batching for himself, doing his own washing, always keeping the hut pleasantly clean, though it had the homelessness of a bachelor's house. Two years ago, he had married; and when Sergeant Wellman had called, there had been something so good in the hut that it made the Sergeant lonely. Not that there was anything

by MACKENZIE COTTRELL

Illustrated by his fellow-Australian PERCY LEASON

John was quite stiff and cold, and the Sergeant felt great sadness for the girl back at the hut.

obtrusive in the relation of the large, fair young man and the rather plain freckle-faced and red-haired girl. But as the pans and the stove shone, she shone, so that her lips dimpled to smiles when she was working, and her eyes held remembered wonder. And when John rode up, he had brought her a branch of wild may and he kissed her quickly before they came in where the Sergeant was waiting.

When the baby came, they were frantic because the child was puny and cried, and it was the Sergeant who worked out a changed formula so that the baby had fattened and bloomed. And they named the baby for him, pleasing him more than he would have admitted. Little Tommy was now only twelve months old, but the Sergeant was privately convinced that the boy knew him well. And when he visited the hut, there were very pleasant walks with the boy on his shoulder, a little kicking weight, pleasantly firm to the touch under blue rompers.

WHILE it was absurd, the Sergeant believed now that he had known John would never come back—and that the little song of youth in the hut was ended—from the moment that he had received last night's long-distance telephone call from Mary, John's wife. She said bravely that she was sure that everything was all right, but John had not come home for supper. She also apologized for asking the Sergeant to come so far, but John would not want her to call Harry. The Sergeant had thought privately that Harry probably would not have helped her anyway, for there had been bitterness between the stepbrothers since childhood: and from the time that John had taken up the selection, Harry had used every weapon of wealth and power to rob John of water rights and of access to the great stock route. "Don't bother him," the Sergeant had said. "I'll be there before you can say Jack Robinson!"

He had driven hard for the forty miles to the selection. And Mary's face had been very pale under its freckles as she explained that John had been having trouble with wild dogs, so that he was yarding the sheep every night. He could not have been more than five miles from the homestead, but now, at ten o'clock, he still had not come in. The matter was complicated by the fact that he had been setting spring guns for the dingoes, putting up the trigger-wires after the sheep had passed, and leaving the guns set for the night. She did not know where the guns were, and John had forbidden her riding any of the trails through the home paddock, but she had gone to the end of the lane and called, and fired a rifle as a signal. There had been no answer.

"Know if he has guns round the outer fence?" the Sergeant asked.

"I don't think so."

"Then I'll take a horse and ride the fence for a start."

ARMED with a flashlight and a ridiculously bobbing lantern to use if the flashlight failed, he had ridden into the dark under the silver shawl of stars—hoping that John had not set guns round the fence. And while normally riding into the bush at night was like lifting a curtain on its private life, his nerves began to play him tricks so that he was afraid, and it seemed to him that evil was loose in the night. As if in snapping frost and sparkling starshine, some terrible thing had befallen. When, every few hundred yards, he stopped and gave the long, Australian coo-ee that is the most carrying cry in the world, it was as if the silence laughed at him for hoping for answer, as if the great grass reaches and the pale ghosts of dead trees and the blackness of the scrubs knew that there would never be answer.

Where he estimated that he must be almost opposite to the homestead, a wider pad swerved in to join the trail along the fence. In its dust lit by the flashlight beam were clearly printed the tracks of a galloping horse. The Sergeant had tied his own mount to the fence and knelt to play his flashlight over the surface of the pad. Partially under the horse's tracks showed those of a large dog, running fast. . . . And the Sergeant's heart had felt heavy. For a married man with responsibilities to try to ride down a dingo at any time was foolish; but in open country and on a hot day, when the wild dog would tire, it could be done. Late on a cold

evening in rough country it was potential suicide. Standing, he had called loudly to the echoing night. Only the sharp stillness of frost answered him.

He had not wanted to follow the tracks along the fence toward the south, for he had had a great foreboding of what he would find—and how he would go back and tell the girl was more than he had known; but walking carefully beside the pad, he went on along the fence. Then where a broken wire from the fence lay across the pad, the horse-tracks had plowed and cut deep, and the broken herbage showed where the horse had come down. Twenty feet farther on, John lay partly hunched with his face against the ground. The hard earth beneath the velvet veil of dust was slightly dented by the force with which his head had struck. He was quite stiff and cold, and the Sergeant, down on one knee beside him, held one of his large, cold hands for a moment and felt great sadness for his friend who was gone, and for the girl back at the hut.

Then he went to his horse and freed the saddle blanket to cover John's head and shoulders, and then took the long route back round the fence, while with every mile it had seemed more impossible to tell the girl.

He had not wanted her to think that John was coming home, so as soon as he had sighted the iron roof that looked like water in the starlight, he had shouted: "It's Sergeant Wellman, Mary!" He saw her open the door that she had had to have shut to keep the baby warm. She stood in the doorway, holding to one side of the frame with both hands. He shouted in what seemed to him a ridiculously loud voice, "I'm afraid it's bad news." She did not speak and he rode up to her. "I'm afraid it's very bad news, dear."

The dog had paused to scratch beside an ant bed! Then it had sat down facing the body!

She simply stood, holding tight to the door frame with both hands. He jumped down and clumsily and heavily patted her arm. "But he never knew. He didn't suffer at all." She inclined her head and stood aside to let him enter. Her face looked as if she were dying, and her lips shook so that they fluttered. She said: "Thank you." He helped her to a chair, and she sat holding the chair with both hands. She whispered: "There is coffee on the stove." He knelt down clumsily beside her and took one of her hands. "I'm sorry, Mary, so sorry," he said, holding her hand with one of his, and patting their joined hands.

"I know," she said. "You are our dear, kind friend." Her own shaking hand touched his hair. "Thank you for telling me quickly."

He got up and towered above her, trying for something that would help her. With the completely honest man's innocent unawareness of what the words revealed, he said: "If you knew how different this place was after you came here, Mary, you'd know how happy you made him. Any man would have been jealous of what you brought here! I don't think any man was ever happier than you made John."

THROUGH the sadness of night, he thought that a man who had had what John had had, should not have done what John had done. By three o'clock he could not believe that John had done it—yet there had been the record in the dust. Before the first blue steel of dawn cut the horizon, he was back at the scene of the accident. He wanted an hour or two alone before the troopers came to take in John's body. Now for a quarter of a mile along the pad that came in from the east, the tracks of John's galloping horse were superimposed upon the tracks of the racing dingo. Then a crushed place in the grass marked where the horse and rider had come in from the north. Beyond that, the dog's approaching tracks showed alone.

The Sergeant followed the tracks of the horse, marked now only by trampled grass. At the edge of a little swale that had been burned over, the tracks of the horse showed again more clearly; walking here. Beyond the tracks of the horse were the evidences of many sheep having grazed eastward. Evidently on the previous morning John had driven the sheep out to the burned-over strip for its re-shooting grass. He had been looking for possible stragglers last evening when he had glanced toward the pad and seen the dingo. He hadn't had a rifle, but he had set out in pursuit of the marauder—unable to resist the slim chance of killing the thing that had caused so much havoc in his flock. But it had been such a poor chance! Surely John would have known that a man could not ride down a wild dog on a cold evening in rough going? Apparently he hadn't.

AGAIN the Sergeant went back to the pad and walked slowly beside it to the fence. The story in the dust was as exact as if it were a written transcript; the spraddled and deep-dug claws of the racing dog, the deep tracks and flung earth that marked an extended horse. . . . Probably John had freed a stirrup and was swinging it as a potential club. Horse and rider had nearly crashed into the fence as they turned south, but it had been the cursed chance of the loosely looped wire that had brought the horse down and flung poor John where he lay now with the saddle blanket over head and shoulders. Yes, the Sergeant had been right about the stirrup iron—there it lay some six feet from the body under a purple-flowered sage bush. The horse, evidently unhurt, had got to its feet and raced off to the east. He must go after it as soon as the troopers came. He must also find the spring guns—though it was unlikely that John had got them set last night.

Meantime he moved on along the pad by the fence where the dog tracks continued to the south. . . . Suddenly he halted and stared, his ruddy face flushing almost purple with excitement. Ten yards from where the body lay, the tracks showed that the dog had slowed to a walk! Five yards farther, and the dog had paused to sniff and scratch beside an ant bed! Then it had sat down facing the body! The impressions left by its planted forepaws and seated hocks were clear in the frailty of the dust.

The Sergeant's hair crawled slowly on his nape. What had he struck here? A demon wild thing that lured a man to death and then contemptuously scratched earth and sat down to laugh fifteen yards from a man's dead body? He knew as surely as his name was Thomas Wellman that he hadn't! No wild thing on earth was flying for its life at one moment, and interestedly sniffing for news of its kind at the next! Still less would it sit down to

"I'm afraid it's very bad news. . . . But he never knew. He didn't suffer at all."

study a still quivering man! Only a tame dog would do that—and even a tame dog shouldn't have done it quite like that if a horse and rider had just crashed behind it. . . . But what of the rest of the story written on the earth? Could the marauder have been a tame dog gone wild? A dog lost perhaps by some drover months or years ago along the stock route?

Some dogs did go back to the wilderness. But the story in the dust still wasn't right. The dog—whether pure dingo or lost domestic dog—had been running hard from the moment the horse tracks had entered the pad. A moment prior to its scratching by the ant bed, there had assumably been the struggling smash of the horse and rider behind it. A dog wouldn't have acted like that. Yet it had. Why?

The Sergeant was shivering slightly in the silver flood of sunlight as he stood up. The only reason he could see for the dog's having scratched and sat was that the story in the dust was a forgery—that the dog had been acting under orders so that it would leave a record of accident for his eves or the eyes of the other bushmen who would come to find John. (The first thing any bushman would look for would be the story on the ground.) The only reason for forging the story would be the covering of murder. With the grass beginning to ripple like gold grain to the morning wind, and the birds singing as if they would burst, murder was hard to believe even if against evidence you had been looking for it. But he tried to re-read the dust-page from the angle of murder.

Some one had actually killed John elsewhere, perhaps near the edge of the burned swale. The murderer had it all planned in advance, knowing that everyone knew that John had been battling with wild dogs. Having killed, the murderer sent or called his dog fast along the pad, then mounted John's horse and rode at a gallop over the trail of the dog. He had already stretched the wire across the pad to spill the horse. . . . No, that didn't quite do. For the murderer would have come down with the horse. Somewhere before they reached the wire, the murderer had

"Are you demented, Sergeant?" Harry Williams asked coldly.

to get off and send the horse on alone—that was something for the Sergeant to seek, now that he knew what to look for!

After the horse had spilled over the wire, the murderer must have gone back and carried John's body cross-country on his own horse to throw it where it lay. . . . Or had John perhaps been killed where he lay, and then the stage set? No, that would have been hard to do, for the murderer would have had to keep off the pad, and that was something that would have made John wonder. It was more likely they had met by the swale, the murderer keeping in deep grass or on the naked ironstone. The traces of the murderer's horse by the swale, and as he carried John's body, were something more to look for, something that would never have been seen in tall grass or on stone if a man hadn't been looking for it.

The little emu bush opposite the loose wire might show traces of the wire having been tied to it, for it would have been stretched tight across the pad, not merely left looped as the chance hazard it seemed—though doubtless the murderer would have padded the trunk of the bush with grass and sticks so that the wire would not leave telltale cuts. . . . The Sergeant sprang to his feet, for from the direction of the swale came a soft, multiple sound; the drifting *baa* of moving sheep.

The Sergeant swore. He had not expected them to have worked their way so far from their watering place for some hours yet, but the woolly idiots were already trampling with small obliterating hoofs across the grass flats between the burned land and the pad from the east. He ran, leaping logs and branches, to try to head them off, and had almost succeeded when a rabbit hole brought him down and agonizingly twisted his ankle. The ankle slowed him so that part of the flock broke toward the fence and part flowed obstinately around him and pattered stubbornly in the direction of the body. He succeeded only in turning them back from the ground about the body itself—and then damned if two old ewes didn't break past and head in with small jumps right where the dog had scratched and sat! Nursing his ankle and wishing he could kick himself, the Sergeant surveyed the trampled pad. . . . What he had had to say had been flimsy enough before. He had already pictured himself in court, standing at attention. "Yes, Your Honor, I'm convinced it wasn't accident but murder."

"Will the Sergeant be good enough to explain?"

"The dog sat down, Your Honor. The troopers saw where it sat down, Your Honor—"

Now he wouldn't even be able to say the troopers had seen it. Now he wouldn't be able to see where the murderer had obliterated the signs of his leaping off to send the horse plunging into the wire. Now he might not be able to pick up the murderer's concealed tracks in the grass flats. He would cut a fine figure when he said what he thought! But he would be a poor policeman if he didn't say it. . . . Or could he be letting his imagination run away with him? Had he spent too much time alone in the gray and blue of the bush? He thought: *I've got to stick to what I know. I know the dog wouldn't have stopped and sat down unless it had been running under control—without anything to frighten it. I've got to stick to that!*

A distant coo-ee from the north marked the approach of the troopers. He hobbled to meet them along a pad where there was now only the small, sharp lace of sheep-tracks.

When the sad business of loading John's body was completed, he said: "Morton, I want you to ride the pad east to the homestead—holding a branch in front of you to spring the guns if any of them are set and you miss seeing them. Think what you're doing, and don't start singing! Riggs and Carney, you take the body to my car at the homestead; then you can take it to town, Carney—and ask for a medical examination of the wound on the forehead. And don't breathe a word outside about my wanting it! Understand? Riggs, after you get the body to the car, come back and join me. I expect to be near the stock route, but you'll see the smoke of my lunch fire. Morton, after you get to the homestead, you stay with Mrs. Williams and the baby. Phone the station and say that I'm looking around and won't be back today. If I don't get back by tomorrow night, send this note to the Inspector—not before." He blushed at the dramatic implications of this, and rode irritatedly away.

The note that the Inspector was not to get unless the Sergeant did not come back had concluded: *"Because of the facts I have detailed, I am convinced that John Williams was murdered. It is my personal opinion that the murderer was his stepbrother, Harry Williams. I am now going to interview the latter. Respectfully yours, Thomas Wellman, Sergeant of Police."*

In the next two hours, the Sergeant found blurred horse-tracks near the swale that could have been made by the murderer's horse or by John Williams' horse. He re-studied the place where John's head had rested, but the depression could have been made by impact or by intent. He could not swear that it had not been the result of impact. He found a place where the two top wires of the fence had been recently re-twitched, but while it could mark the place where a horse had been led over the fence, the wires could have been broken by fighting 'roos, and the repairs have been made

by John himself. After cutting two top wires and leading his own horse over into the great property that adjoined the selection, he picked up a pad a quarter of a mile to the south, onto which, some hundreds of yards from the fence, a faint disturbance of the grass led, while on the pad were blurred impressions that could have been made by a horse with sacking tied over its feet. Wind and racing ants and scampering wild things had dimmed them and all other records of the night, but he did pick up the clear traces of a dog. Heading west, he followed the pad to the great stock route; and here were such countless tracks that further scanning of the dust was useless. (He hunted about a bit for the sacks that might have been tied round the murderer's horse's feet—if there had been a horse or a murderer. But as he had expected, he did not find them. The murderer—if there was a murderer—would be too smart for that.)

The country here had changed to the silver-gray of small mulga trees and the silken sheen of the blue grass was dabbed here and there with the blue of late cornflowers, that the Sergeant had often thought were the only things bluer than the moon sky. He made a fire in the straggly shadow of a beefwood tree and drew in the dust with a mulga stick while he waited for his quart to boil. . . . John had been the stepson of Old Man Williams, who had been a mean, almost illiterate and quarrelsome man with a flair for business and for tyranny. Perhaps old Williams' one redeeming feature had been his affection for his stepson. But even that had been marred by possessiveness, so that when young John married, the old man refused to forgive the boy. The quarrel had been fanned by Williams' own son Harry, a shrewd and grasping chip off the old block, but even less likable. Six months ago the old man had died, and had surprised everyone by leaving his property to be equally divided between John and Harry when John should reach the age of twenty-one, Harry retaining rights of residence, but with the proviso that if either man died, the whole property and its income went to the survivor.

This was bad for Mary; for while John had been doing well on the selection, she would hardly be able to carry on the still poorly improved place without extra income. Harry certainly wouldn't help her. And the Sergeant's present problem was how much Harry might have helped himself? . . . Harry had hated John, and his resentment of the will was common knowledge. But it was a long step from resentment to murder. Harry was a rich and powerful man. And the Sergeant knew how the Inspector would react to what the Sergeant thought. Boiled down, all he, the Sergeant, had against Harry was motive, and the fact that Harry was notably cruel to animals—and the Sergeant distrusted any man who was cruel. Yet his certainty that John had been murdered persisted. If John had been murdered, it had been no action of a casual maniac or tramp. It had been carefully thought out by a man familiar with the circumstances, clever in the ways of the bush and of bushmen, and cold-heartedly cruel. All this fitted Harry. Except for the fact that the dog had sat down, the thing was perfect—a murder that wouldn't be traced in a million years. But the dog had sat down. He, the Sergeant, the only man who knew it, must not lose sight of that. And since he believed in the direct intervention of a God of justice in the cause of justice, the record in the dust had a certain majestic quality of command. It was as if the mills of God that ground the dust had lettered out the words: *"This shall not be!"* As if the Sergeant, who was the humble and blundering servant of justice, must not ignore the commandment that had been thus given.

The Sergeant ran, leaping logs and branches, to try to head them off, and had almost succeeded when a rabbit hole brought him down.

But where did he go from there? He didn't really hope for anything from the medical examination. A blow struck by a blunt object would scarcely be detectable from an injury sustained by a man's head in striking the blunter object of the earth. He didn't hope for any further evidence. . . . So now what did he do? Let the murderer get away with it—or take a wild and lawless chance that could ruin him and would probably accomplish nothing? He could not eat the slices of cold mutton and home-baked bread he'd brought for lunch. And as he drank his quart of scalding black tea, the sweat ran down his red face, and he mopped his forehead with his handkerchief. Everything in his nature opposed what he was thinking. The daring of what he was thinking made it impossible for him really to imagine himself doing it. Yet there was his dead friend, and there was a girl, and a little boy who was named Tommy.

A sound of hoofs marked the arrival of young Riggs. Standing up, the Sergeant said: "The quart is boiling again. Get your tea and eat as we ride. We're going to talk to Mr. Harry Williams."

Five hours later as they rode up to the great homestead through the fierce light of sunset, he added to the astonished trooper: "Whatever I say, don't look like a surprised trout with your mouth open! Understand?" He scowled at the youngster. "And make notes of everything I say, and of everything Williams says and does. You can use that precious shorthand of yours, Riggs. That's what you're here for."

He still wasn't sure he could do his own part. Everything combined to make him feel a wilder fool; the twenty stockmen gathering for the evening meal in the outside dining-room, the uniformed housemaid carrying a tray of polished silver to the dining-room in the main house, the yardman feeding prize hens, the gardener turning off a fine sprinkler system. Yet while all this was impressive, it made the Sergeant angrier because of the needlessness of what he believed had been done.

A vacuous-looking youth whom he assumed to be the bookkeeper came out of the office that adjoined the store. Dismounting, the Sergeant said: "Where is Mr. Williams?" And before the youth could do more than glance toward Harry Williams' private apartment in the great house, the Sergeant walked past him—taking care not to limp—crossed the baked-earth enclosure, firmly ascended the steps to the veranda, crossed this and going up the outside stair, he trod heavily into Harry Williams' private study, which was rich with leather and books and brass, and a great contrast to the hut where Mary was grieving. Harry Williams was seated at a fine desk with plate glass over its green felt, and a green-shaded brass lamp lit his thin, forty-five-year-old and rather pinched dark face, and he wore a fine white shirt and a bronze-brown tie. For all his spareness, he was, the Sergeant noticed again, a very powerful man, with corded muscles in his arms where his shirtsleeves were rolled up.

The Sergeant said heavily: "Harry Williams, I arrest you in the name of the King for the murder of your brother John! And I must warn you that anything you say may be used against you."

He saw the bookkeeper staring popeyed. He knew that behind him the trooper had forgotten his instructions and had let his mouth fall open. Harry Williams said coldly: "Are you demented, Sergeant?" But his face was greener in the green light from the shade, and he said a little rapidly: "I haven't seen John for six months. I haven't been on John's property for twelve months. I haven't been to John's boundary for three weeks."

"So you know John was killed on his property—near the boundary?" the Sergeant said placidly.

"I simply mean I haven't been near John!" Harry Williams said contemptuously.

"It was a good plan," the Sergeant said, seating himself on the edge of the desk. "Killing John with a blow and then making it look like accident. Killing him there by the burned land, then—" He detailed the matter carefully and deliberately, praying he was right. "Only two things went wrong. You let your dog sit down fifteen yards from John's body—" Harry Williams' small, gray eyes darted involuntarily to the big dog lying in the corner of the room. "That, as you know, wouldn't happen if a dog was being hunted," the Sergeant said. "But what you really didn't figure on was that Mary Williams was out helping her husband with the sheep. She saw you kill him before she fainted—"

"That's a lie!" Harry Williams said, coming to his feet and leaning far over the desk. "John said she was at the house with the baby—" He stopped, and his face, which was paper-white now, was twisting as if strings were pulling it into strange grins that showed his teeth. Out of the corner of an eye, the Sergeant saw the young trooper making furious shorthand notes. Before them, Harry Williams swayed like a reed in the wind and pitched to the floor in a faint.

As they took their prisoner to town in the borrowed car, the trooper said: "I didn't know Mrs. Williams had seen it, Sergeant."

Harry Williams sat handcuffed, his face unseeing and unhearing, his bulging eyes expressing only vast astonishment.

"Neither does Mrs. Williams," the Sergeant said softly. He was still mopping his forehead. And he still didn't know how the Inspector was going to take the fact that he, the Sergeant, a sworn police officer, had tampered with the truth and used false evidence against a prisoner. The Inspector would think it a distinctly foreign, almost subversive action, very unlike anything that would have occurred in the force during the reign of George V, when the Inspector had been a sergeant. The Sergeant himself was still appalled that he, a sergeant of the King, had starkly lied. On the other hand, there was a great warmth in him for a girl and a little boy who would now have comfort instead of want and loss. He, the Sergeant, would take a hand in bringing up the boy to be the best darned bushman in the land. Fine tutors could now take care of the boy's book-learning, but there was a lot to be learned from the sky and the grass and the dust. He would see that the boy grew up to be kind to the lesser creatures that God had put in man's charge. That was very important, for as God gave dominion, He also gave responsibility. . . . And some day, perhaps some day far in the future, he, the Sergeant, might offer a lonely woman his own strength and reliability—in which today's episode was really the only major lapse, and he hoped she could forgive that for the boy!

He might tell her that he didn't expect her to feel for him the song that had been hers and John's; that belonged to youth and the morning. He would ask only to be strength and comfort to her, and to share the good bond of mutual trust and mutual kindness and respect. But perhaps—just perhaps—some day she might say to him that a song of morning was an untried thing that might silence with the years, but that the tried years in which a man was reliable and did his duty and used such power as God gave him with kindness, were something strong as life itself. It was only a hope, but a man could do very well on hope if the hope shook the very fiber of his heart.

"Damned dust's bad tonight!" the trooper said as the car kicked across a series of furrows.

The Sergeant looked gravely at the prisoner. "Sometimes," he said, "it can be the damning dust."

The Facts of Life.... about Color

Some of them we all know—and some offer an interesting surprise.

by JOHN DUNLAVY

COLOR is not only a physical fact, it is a state of mind. For people not only see color—they react to it.

RED stimulates physical action, stirs passion, makes us feel warmer, seems loud to the ears, makes us restless.

YELLOW makes us think with greater clarity, is associated with things sacred and uplifting. It is light, airy, creates a feeling of floating, is the color most productive of sleep.

GREEN calms the nerves, blankets excitement, is cool, engenders feelings akin to spring, growing, etc.

COLOR can play tricks. A bright object against a dark background will appear larger in size. A twenty-pound box painted blue will look heavier—and feel heavier to carry—than the same box painted light yellow. We tend to overestimate size of surface in bright reds and yellows, and to underestimate surfaces in greens and blues.

SET balloons of different color aloft, and the yellow will remain visible longest.

IN order to make the cigarette packages of two leading brands show up in television ads it's necessary to use "dummies" painted in a different color from those you see on the store counters. Color behaves so strangely in video transmission that many colors which are easily distinguished by the eye appear to be identical on the TV screen. Pastels all show up white; red shows up as black. One girl singer in a red dress, before a black curtain, turned up on the screen as a disembodied head, arms and a lovely neck line.

AMERICAN industry has become so aware of the effects of color that it hires "color engineers" to color-design its products. At the advice of a color engineer, an oil company recently repainted all its service stations. The only spot of red allowed was on the pump for premium gas. Sales on the higher grade fuel went up a reported fifty per cent.

AMERICAN auto makers used twelve thousand colors a year on cars just two decades ago. Each car had six or seven colors and new models introduced a complete new line of colors every ninety days. Each of 250 paintmakers had to keep up a range of one thousand different colors at all times. A color engineer by means of a consumer-survey reduced the total to six hundred a year. It took five years to do it and they've held down to that number ever since.

FIVE out of one hundred men are color-blind, one out of two hundred women.

ONE reason for the stimulating rose colors in some restaurants in Longchamps was to discourage after-lunch dawdlers so more patrons could be served.

PHOTO darkroom workers who were irritable and quarrelsome while working in the red-lighted darkroom got along well when developing work was done under green light.

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN sells more programs at sports events when it has covers of red.

PHONE booth interiors were painted in different colors and given bells of equal volume. To a group which tested them the white booth seemed to have the loudest bell, the purple booth softest.

RED is supposedly the favorite color of athletes, blue of intellectuals, yellow of egotists, purple of sophisticates, and orange of the convivial.

GREEN plates for salads doubled a cafeteria's salad sales—made the lettuce appear crisper, tomatoes redder.

COLORS have their effect on the animal world, too. Mosquitoes like black, blue and red, in that order, experiments in Portland, Oregon, show. They are repelled by white and orange. Yellow traps catch the most beetles. Ship hulls in white, yellow or light green attract fewer barnacles.

EAT a peach in darkness and it will seem to have less flavor than when you turn on the light and see the color.

STAND twenty feet away from a red chair and a blue chair (not side by side) and the red chair will appear a foot closer.

WHITE kitchens are on the way out. According to a recent survey, more than one out of three women want colored stoves and refrigerators—in the East, more than one out of two women and in the Middle West almost two out of three.

A DESPONDENT oldster of 87 was snapped out of a will to die when the English hospital room in which he lay with a broken leg was decorated in a cheery primrose, turquoise and red color scheme. He had recovered enough to go home three weeks later, and wound up courting a young widow who owned a pub.

PUT two contrasting colors, like red and green, side by side and they seem redder and greener, respectively. But a red beside a non-contrasting yellow looks bluish and the yellow seems green.

IN England, green is considered an unlucky color for automobiles, and no one uses it—except the dowager Queen Mary. A certain shade of maroon is reserved, by unwritten agreement, for the cars of King George. When American cars were introduced in that color, they failed to sell; the manufacturers tagged the color "King George Maroon," and they sold.

ALTHOUGH people refer to "complementary" colors as forming the most agreeable combinations, in reality they prefer near-complementary combinations, the preferences being to the warm side.

THE most agreeable combinations of color afford contrast in hue, brightness and saturation.

COLORS appear different to us at various seasons of the year. This is brought about because our eyes become "tuned" to the effects of green foliage background of summer and the barren white background of winter snows. In summer we are said to be red-sighted (because the eye tends to generate complementaries) and dark-sighted in winter.

THE city of London succeeded in reducing by more than one-third the number of suicides from Blackfriars Bridge by painting the gloomy old structure a gay bright green.

The Meanest Crooks

THEY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FACT THAT GOVERNMENT PENSION AND SOCIAL SECURITY CHECKS LOOK LIKE MONEY TO MANY PEOPLE, WHO CASH THEM WITHOUT ASSURANCE THAT THE ENDORSEMENT IS GENUINE.

WHEN Mrs. Gertrude Johnston, widow of an infantryman killed in World War II combat, reported that for two successive months she had failed to receive Government-insurance compensation checks, her only income, the item was hardly spectacular enough to be noticed by the newspapers. The theft from a letterbox of two of the 268 millions of U. S. Treasury checks issued this year seems a little crime.

The misery caused by the crime might be called little, too—by everybody except the people to whom the checks mean bread and butter. The widow and her children go hungry. In New York, an elderly woman reporting thefts to the Secret Service fainted in the office from hunger. A woman in her seventies walked into a Government office in Washington and sobbed that her landlord had served eviction papers—her Social Security checks weren't coming through.

Indeed, the vast majority of victims are the weak and helpless: disabled veterans, soldiers' widows and children; the blind, the aged.

Check-stealing is a double-barreled crime, affecting not only the payee, but also the unsuspecting merchant who cashes the forged check. The weight of check losses has shoved numerous small businesses into bankruptcy. A middle-aged couple in Chicago, who barely managed to make both ends meet in a small tobacco and magazine shop, thought they were being neighborly by cashing Treasury checks. They wound up on the city's relief rolls. Not long ago the half-blind owner of a small New York restaurant closed his doors and hanged himself; he had cashed too many forged checks.

Total the thefts and forgeries of Treasury checks, and you find a major crime wave. In 1945 the Secret Service reported 16,380 cases of forged checks. By 1950 the number jumped to 30,059. Monthly reports from Secret Service field offices point to a higher total for this year. Except for narcotics traffic, Treasury-check forgery has become the fastest-growing crime in the nation.

This is no amateur's crime. In 1950, 2336 forgers were arrested, and seven out of ten were repeat offenders, old hands at this lowest form of thievery. Convicted forgers are the largest single category in the Federal prison population.

APARTMENT houses and housing projects in cities are the favorite picking grounds. The average Treasury check comes to sixty-seven dollars, yet the take of a well-organized gang frequently reaches tens of thousands of dollars. In Seattle a small gang of thieves followed mail carriers in automobiles, swiftly moved in and ransacked letterboxes, scooted back to their headquarters and doctored false Social Security cards and drivers' licenses which they then used as identification to pass the checks. Before arrest they had stolen thirty thousand dollars.

Two- and three-person teams with records of more than one hundred forgeries are captured in New York every year. In Los Angeles, agents corralled five members of one family and two of their friends who had been getting along very nicely by cashing fourteen thousand dollars' worth of Treasury checks at banks, hotels, liquor stores and food stores.

Handwriting experts mount enlarged photographs and point out telltale resemblances.

# of All

by JOSEPH P. BLANK

Girls and boys have been moving into the check-forgery field to buy narcotics.

Thieves know that most checks are delivered around the first of the month. They get to letterboxes right behind the mail carriers. If the thief sees that he's noticed by a resident, he'll often pretend to be searching for the name of a friend. Or he poses as a salesman, his sample case serving as a receptacle for stolen mail. A surprising number of boxes are left unlocked. The others are easily forced open. Many thefts could be frustrated, the Post Office Department says, if the resident emptied the letterbox promptly after delivery.

THE criminals rarely stop at one check. The first attempt often seems so easy that the thief keeps on stealing —and each step in the process of crime draws Federal officers closer to him.

Sooner or later the forger must betray himself. He passes a check in a store, and agents get a description from the merchant. The phony endorsement on the check gets a minute examination. Each field office of the Secret Service has an exhaustive handwriting file of all forgers who have ever operated in the area. Incoming forgeries are checked against this file, and often this promptly announces the identity of the criminal. If this fails, there are enormous master files of handwriting in Washington. On arrest, the suspect is given a handwriting test. Similarities to the forged signatures on checks usually are obvious, and when they are pointed out, the forger usually admits his crime. If he holds out, and the case goes to trial, handwriting experts from the Secret Service mount enlarged photographs of the samples and point out to the jury the telltale resemblances.

If the writing is new and clues are scarce, agents keep a watchful wait. Will another check by the same forger show up? Usually. In the same general area? Probably. Forgers feel safer in a familiar neighborhood.

Agents warn stores. Police keep a lookout. Gradually a net is woven from a pattern worked out by the forger himself. The arrest may take five hours, five days, five months or even two or three years, but no chronic forger gets away.

When a new criminal appeared in Washington, agents questioned victimized merchants, but got only a vague description that applied to thousands of men. One storekeeper remarked: "This isn't much, but about a year and a half ago I was passing the White House, and I think I saw this guy marching in some kind of picket line."

That faint lead opened a trail. The agent searched through news photographs of picket lines. One picket seemed to fit the description. The photograph was enlarged, then shown to the merchant. "That's the man," was the reply.

Near the building where one of the checks had been stolen, another man recognized the photograph. "Don't know his name or address," he said, "but he used to hang around here a long time ago. He was a little different. Said he was interested in painting."

The agent visited every art school in Washington. Finally he found a teacher who remembered the face and dug the name out of the files. The arrest was made twelve hours later.

No two cases are alike. When checks which had disappeared from a large apartment building began turning up in department stores, no one could supply a clue. The handwriting was unfamiliar. A vigilant watch of the building produced nothing. For a while the thefts stopped. Then another bad check was turned over to the Secret Service; this one bore the second endorsement of a resident in the building. Agents were convinced that the forger knew the names of people in the building.

A methodical, apartment-by-apartment inspection of handwriting brought agents to the top floor and into the living-room of a pleasant woman. The agents asked her to write a few words on a piece of paper. The telltale forgery signs flashed like a neon light. The two agents gave her a thoughtful look. She nodded in acknowledgment, and signed her confession that night.

George Thompson legitimately reported his Treasury check stolen, and received a replacement from the Government. He was informed that his original check had been taken by Manuel Duff, then still at large. Thompson mulled this over, and it struck him that Duff had found a lucrative business. So he too began stealing and forging checks. Agents nabbed Thompson before Duff was arrested.

DESPITE the heartlessness of the crime, the punishment is all too often so mild as to be absurd. Of the twenty-one hundred cases prosecuted last year, nearly half the defendants received only fines, suspended sentences or probationary sentences. In hundreds of instances, multiple forgers have been given a year and a day for their second or third offense. Many are eligible for parole after serving one-third of their sentence.

Heavier sentences do reduce crimes. In two Midwest cities, forgeries fell off when judges began spelling out six- and eight-year sentences. News quickly spread that the courts were "busting" criminals, and so prospective forgers decided against the risk.

Edward T. Ward has been passing Treasury checks for more than twenty years, and the Secret Service estimates his take at between six hundred and seven hundred checks. He is going to prison for the fourth time. After his most recent arrest, he was released on

bond to await trial. Directly upon leaving the Secret Service office, where he signed his confession, Ward followed a mail carrier, and stole and cashed three checks within five hours.

THE final move in the crime, the passing of the forged check, should be the most difficult. Actually, it's the easiest. Federal law-enforcement agencies constantly warn business men to be wary of strangers bearing checks. But the advice is ignored, and the crooks make suckers out of supposedly shrewd business men a hundred times a day.

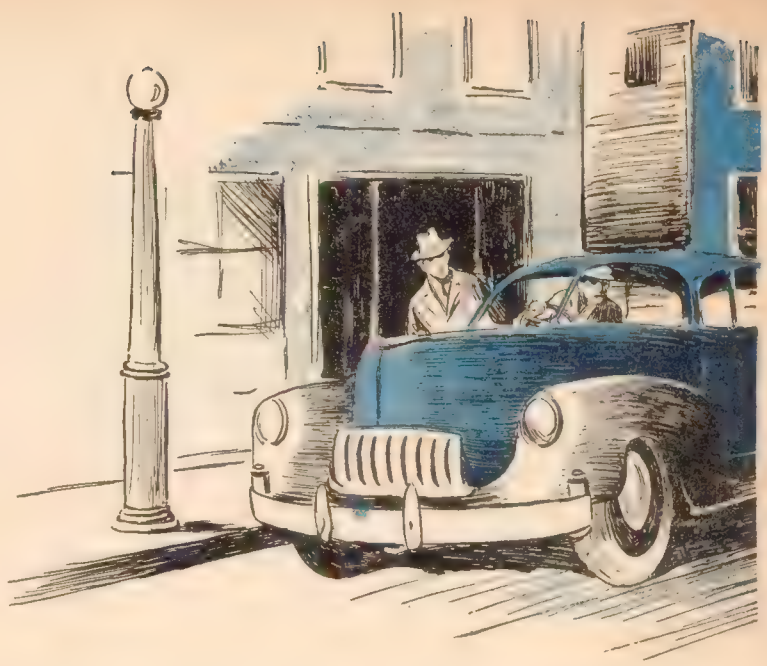
A forged check is a bad check. The person who cashes it always takes the loss. Relatively few business men seem to have grasped this simple fact. In hundreds of instances male forgers have cashed allotment checks, made out to wives of service men, without provoking a glance of suspicion. One forger cashed six checks, all made out to *different* payees, in one small New York butcher store on the *same* day.

The gullibility of merchants is unbelievable. They will cash almost any piece of paper that has a dollar sign on it. In Chicago a woman made a small purchase at a furniture store and offered the salesman a Treasury check. He looked at its face, then asked the woman to endorse it. She turned away, and appeared to be signing it. After wrapping the purchase, the salesman slipped the check into the cash register without a glance. That evening a clerk in the accounting department read the endorsement and nearly jumped out of her chair. The alleged signature had been crossed out and below it were the words, *"This is a stolen check."*

A storekeeper cashed an official-looking paper from the Veterans Administration. It merely read: *"This will inform you that on May 12 a check for $112.52 will be mailed to you."*

A Pittsburgh attorney who was a Reserve officer hit on a novel but unlawful stunt for persuading men to join the Reserves. He mailed out letters bearing a facsimile of a Treasury check which contained the prospective recruit's name and specified an amount of money. Under the illustration, the attorney wrote: *"This represents the amount of money you will receive if you will enlist in the Army Reserve."* One "payee" clipped out the "check," endorsed it and cashed it at the corner grocery store.

After stealing enough checks to fill a paper grocery bag and throwing away the ones with names "too hard to spell," Thomas Roach teamed up with Lloyd Smith and the two sauntered into a South Omaha tavern. Smith cashed one check and nonchalantly left. Roach then cashed a



check. In three minutes Smith returned wearing dark glasses and another jacket, posed as a new payee and cashed another check. The proprietor lost $180 in less than six minutes.

The pair then sent in a female accomplice to cash another check. She had no trouble.

As usually happens, the gang tried another crack at the generous tavernkeeper. This time he asked for identification. When none was offered, he refused to cash the check for the forgers and noted the license number of their car. This was all the Secret Service needed. The entire gang was rounded up that same night.

IN New York, Shirley Lawton and Whitman Peterson, who had collaborated on some 175 forgeries, found themselves with a stolen $198 check, addressed to Chun T. Ming and marked for Navy pay. Their first instinct was to toss the check away, but the amount goaded them to risk it. They walked into a fashionable haberdashery shop and permitted the clerk to talk them into $40 worth of shirts, ties and socks. The check was presented and no questions were asked about the fact that Peterson was neither Oriental nor wearing a Navy uniform. The couple left with several handsome packages and $158 in cash.

Department stores often cash checks on the basis of a driver's license. This just *asks* for losses. Any unscrupulous person can obtain a blank license, fill it out and give it an official appearance with an improvised stamp.

Many chain food stores and supermarkets are easy marks for the forger. Managers feel compelled to keep up their volume of business through check-cashing, however thin the basis of identification.

The worst victims are the stores that can least afford the losses—the small grocery store, dress-shop and butcher store. The forgers have no mercy on a gullible storekeeper who risks cashing a dubious check in order to make a sale. When one forger finds it easy to pass a check, the grapevine spreads the word, and the merchant finds his business picking up. At least he thinks so for a while. By the time the merchant learns the truth, he may have cashed away his business life.

While merchants take the loss, the carelessness with which they accept checks amounts almost to criminal negligence. In Detroit a grocery store cashed two different checks on the same day for a sixteen-year-old girl. The second check was marked *"Pension."* In New Orleans a young boy had no trouble in cashing a Social Security check.

BEHIND these incidents is the fact that a growing number of minors, fourteen- to nineteen-year-old boys and girls, have been moving into the check-forgery field to buy narcotics. The youths steal the checks, then turn the money over to peddlers for heroin, cocaine or marijuana. In Chicago and New York, judges have called storekeepers into court and severely reprimanded them for contributing to the delinquency of minors. One judge got so disgusted with a merchant that

Illustrated by CLINTON SHEPHERD

In Seattle a gang of thieves followed mail carriers, swiftly moved in and ransacked letterboxes.

he ordered the check casher into jail to spend several solitary hours in thinking about his misdeeds.

The growth of these callous crimes worries all law-enforcement agencies concerned. Officials in the Treasury, Post Office and Justice departments point out that these thefts usually bring hardship to people who depend on the checks for daily living needs: war widows, the blind, old-age pensioners, disabled war veterans and the over-sixty-five-ers who receive Social Security benefits. Frequently they wait several months for a duplicate.

The crimes have risen to their all-time high. Every official and law-enforcement officer agrees on a single, workable solution. If the market for bad checks were eliminated, thefts and forgeries would have to stop. It's up to the business men, partners to the crimes.

Nearly every forgery points to this lesson: *Know your endorser.* Whenever a business man is handed a Treasury check, he should ask himself: "If this check is bad, do I know where to find the endorser?"

If the merchant caters to a transient trade and feels obliged to cash checks, these are the precautions worked out by the Secret Service and the Post Office Department:

Watch the payee endorse the check: Forgers may hesitate in writing the name. At times, a novice will change his mind about forging a signature in the presence of a witness. Read the endorsement. If the check is already endorsed, insist that the payee endorse it again; compare the two signatures.

What's the address? After the check is submitted, ask the payee his address and verify it with that on the check. Suspect any check bearing an address in another neighborhood.

What is the check for? Reason for payment on a federal check is always identified on the left-hand side—*"Pension," "Insurance," "Tax Refund," "Social Security."* It's folly to cash a pension or Social Security checks for anyone younger than middle-aged.

Look for erasures or other irregularities: One thief stole a $37.17 check made out to a woman whose first name was Cleo. Most Treasury-card checks are perforated for business machine accounting, and the thief added another perforation by cutting out the "C," thus changing the name to Leo. Some forgers are afraid of arousing suspicion with big checks. They'll eradicate the first digit in a figure over $100 and try to sneak it past a busy merchant.

Notice the nationality of the payee. Many names are obviously Italian, Irish, Spanish or Slavic. Does the name fit the appearance and accents of the payee?

Carefully examine identification: All Social Security account cards issued since 1946 are clearly marked *"Not For Identification."* Believe it. Names can be eradicated or bleached off a card and the check payee's name typed in. Don't cash checks on the basis of letters, bank statements or bills. They may have been stolen with the check.

If you do cash the check: Don't hesitate to write on the back of the check the serial numbers of identification materials. Forgers may eradicate names on drivers' licenses, Social Security cards and military discharge papers, but sometimes forget to doctor numbers. A serial number can lead agents directly to the criminal.

It is astonishing how many persons firmly believe that any check drawn on the Treasury of the United States is as good as gold. It is *not*, necessarily; it is good only if in the hands of the person entitled to it.

If business men would adhere to the know-your-endorser rule, and if they would examine identifications scrupulously, the forgers would find it nearly impossible to cash checks. The theft of checks would thus become a useless gesture, and the misery and tragedies caused by the nation's meanest crooks would end.

The Lad

"This will unlock the door of the spirits room—" Halvor's eyes widened. "Spirits! You mean—"

HE had good arms, fair shoulders and long supple legs—a runner's legs; but there was no depth to his chest, a defect that Factor Neil MacNeil spotted immediately.

"Take him out," he ordered brusquely, speaking to Dave Sterns, his trail foreman. "The lad in the coyote skins. Where the devil did you find him? And why did you give him Malburn's team?"

"I had to," Sterns said. "Malburn didn't show up this morning."

"Drinking?"

"Could be, sir. I don't know where he is," Sterns said in an injured voice. "I don't damn well care very much, either. If I got to put up with a lying, thieving musher like him—"

MacNeil left Sterns muttering to himself, and crossed the compound with long, quick strides. The boy looked like part Swampy Cree with that square jaw and those high cheekbones; but the color and texture of his skin bore the stamp of the Norsemen, as did the blue eyes glinting like the fiords on a frosty morning.

"What's your name, musher?"

"Halvor," the boy said. "Halvor Dahl. Mr. Sterns hired me."

"You're unhired," MacNeil told him bluntly. "And good God, where'd you find that crazy outfit? The skins are green. Ten below, and they'd freeze stiff as boards. Forty below, and they'd break up and fall off you. You're new to this country, aren't you?"

"Yes sir," the kid admitted, eyes pleading. "First pay, Mr. MacNeil, I will buy me a regular musher's suit. You see, I had to sew these skins together myself."

"Shot the coyotes too, I suppose?"

Halvor nodded.

"Well, you'll damn well freeze in them," MacNeil told him. "This brigade goes a very long way east to Hudson's Bay. Colder than Eskimo's liver. So blasted windy it'll drive your breath back down your throat and strangle you. You wouldn't last three days."

The boy didn't answer, but his gaze met MacNeil's squarely.

"I'll bet you haven't had a good meal in a month," the factor continued. "I need drivers, sure enough. One of my mushers has gone off on a tear. This brigade must reach Churchill on the first of the month, or we'll miss the southbound crews taking the Churchill furs and ours outside."

"I could work for less pay," Halvor suggested hopefully.

MacNeil grew impatient. How the devil to tell him what really lay at the back of his mind, the grim, hard fact that to send him was murder? He'd have that Norsky's blood on his head.

"Fall out, lad," MacNeil said, not unkindly, "and step over to the store. We'll work out something." He turned and beckoned to Sterns. "Unhitch the teams and then hunt up Malburn, Dave. I won't load a bale until we get him or some other dependable musher."

Sterns frowned. "Churchill brigade leaves on the first," he said, jousting figures in his head. "That leaves us only eight days for a twelve-day trip."

"Exactly. You must push 'em."

"If we can't locate Malburn till tomorrow, that's only seven days,"

Illustrated by Charles Chickering

in the Coyote Skins

He finds himself in charge of a Hudson's Bay Company trading post.

by MICHAEL OBLINGER

Sterns went on, figuring. "No musher—no dog-team, sir, ever lived that could make that run in less than eight. It's why I took a chance on this boy, Mr. MacNeil. We could start now. We could make Balsalm Lake by dark, feed light, an' go on till midnight 'fore we bedded down. That's why this boy—I was planning to lend him some better clothes—could pick us out of a hole, sir."

"With that thin chest leaning up right against his backbone?" MacNeil snorted.

"He came all the way here from Winnipeg on skis, half starving," Sterns said. "Broke. A .22 rifle. On them funny-looking boards he can travel like the wind."

THE factor smiled. Sterns had a queer habit of wandering all around a subject, dragging in irrelevant facts that had no possible connection. Wind on skis. So what? That made him a dog-musher? Half starving. That might mean he was allergic to food and would do well on the trail's forced rations.

"Hunt up Malburn," he said gruffly, "and let's get started today, for the love of Pete."

"Yes sir."

Factor MacNeil headed toward a large log building that was lime-washed from eavespoles to foundation stones. The roof was painted red. A white flag with the company's crest floated gayly above the red roof, its flagstaff sunk securely into the center ridgepole. Below the flag was a huge sign that read:

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY
Incorporated May 2nd, 1670

MacNeil strode into the trading room, after closing a creaking door, and removed his parka. Then he took off his coat. In his worry about his delayed dog-train and anger at Malburn, and with instructions on his desk to deliver to Churchill, double quick, all his warehoused fur that was baled and officially lead-sealed, he had almost forgotten about that long, thin shadow that had slid into Fort McGraham on a couple of boards.

"Ah, lad, so it's you!" he said. "Sure enough. I sacked you, so now I must find a spot for you, huh?"

"Please may I go with the teamsters, sir?"

"You heard me before. I said no."

The boy's face fell. Something had melted the frost in those fiord-bright eyes, and he was breathing quickly from his upper chest. Suddenly he coughed, a big hacking gasp. Before Halvor could wipe his mouth, or even close it, MacNeil saw a trickle of red, and thanked God that he, at least, had been observant. Supposing he had left things to Sterns, a good man himself, but no judge of men! Sixty below cold into those frost-nipped lungs, and they would tote the boy's corpse into Churchill.

"How old are you, Halvor?"

"Eighteen, sir."

"Not too young for a musher, but you need more weight. You need—" MacNeil hesitated.

Well, there was so much he needed: experience, strength, maturity, guts. No, that was one thing he did have plenty of—guts. Jove, just look at those coyote skins, would you! A human in desperate straits gamely pitting his wits against a death of cold and exposure—no time to cure the skins, no place to buy thread; likely squatting in some freezing shelter picking out sinews with his teeth.

MacNeil said: "You've done well for a greenhorn, lad. Made your own clothes. But what did you do with the meat?"

The boy flushed. "I ate it," he said.

MACNEIL had no comment on that. He had eaten dog himself, husky meat, years ago on the trail, for it had been, he remembered, a problem of survival—the husky or he.

"I'll fix you right up with some duds," he said, walking around and starting to rummage among the shelves.

Slowly he built up a pile on the counter: Two wool shirts, two suits of long underwear, six pairs of heavy

socks, two pairs of Indian moccasins, mackinaw pants and coat, fur mitts with soft woolen inners. MacNeil sighed, scratched his chin, then disappeared into a darkened closet space and returned with a long-haired, knee-length coat and spread it out in front of Halvor.

"To show you the lining," he said. "Rabbit-skin. Ever hear of a Swampy Cree's woven rabbit-skin robe?"

"No sir."

"Well, the lining is made like the robe. Warmest thing for its weight on earth."

"Yes sir."

MacNeil was adding up figures while he talked. "Three hundred and six dollars," he said, handing Halvor the itemized account.

Halvor blinked. "I—you see, sir—"

"You have no money? You mean, you have no money?" MacNeil sputtered, putting on an act, for he knew very well the boy was broke. "Okay, this is debt, then. God help you! Three hundred and six dollars, and not even a job."

HALVOR glanced at the neat row of figures. "Two hundred and six, sir. You've added wrong."

A slow flush spread to the roots of MacNeil's silvering hair. He'd never been caught so neatly, so quickly.

"I see you can add," he said. "Tell me, can you read?"

"I read and speak English, French and Norwegian," Halvor said. "I was educated in Oslo. Father was a seaman. I went with him after my mother died. His ship sank off the coast of Labrador, and I was—well, I was one of three."

"Just one of three!"

"The other two died aboard an ice-breaker that rescued us, sir. Father had taken out Canadian papers, so I decided to stay. I do not care very much for the sea."

"I dare say," MacNeil said dryly.

"I like dogs," Halvor went on earnestly. "I am determined to drive dogs. Then some day I'll become a great furrier—"

"Trader, you mean."

The boy had uncovered a well in him and was pumping it up. MacNeil listened. Presently he led him into the kitchen and jerked a thumb toward a square boxlike cupboard, then nodded toward a large cookstove.

"You'll rustle your own grub around here, lad, and wait on me. Later, you can help with the books. If you like it, I'll make out apprentice's papers at a quid a week. You will bunk off the hall in the clutter-room after you tidy it up." MacNeil grinned sourly. "That's all. . . . No, it isn't. Tobacco, liquors, bed blankets and pipes are all extras, for which you will be further in debt to me."

"And I shall learn to mush the dogs," Halvor said dreamily.

MacNeil growled and returned to the trading room. . . .

It was past noon and Dave Sterns walked in at the head of a crew of other dog-mushers, eight men in all, and Factor MacNeil gave them one solid look of disgust and swore.

Malburn wasn't with them. They hadn't found him. He needn't ask. He rose angrily, a look of decision on his face.

"Hitch up and load right away," he instructed.

STERNS hurried over. "No trace of Malburn anywhere," he said. "I guess we'll have to leave his team behind."

"No, by God," MacNeil roared, "we won't! Every man—every team. Twelve bales to a load. Got to move that fur out of here. Orders straight from Montreal." He paused, and glared. "Blast that rowdy, drunken sot! I'll kill him. I'll cut his ears off. I'll—"

"Mr. MacNeil," Sterns put in meekly, "then the lad *is* going?"

The factor took Sterns' arm and led him to the door. He kicked the door open savagely. "Get out! Ready Malburn's team. Load at the warehouse, then report here."

"Yes sir."

MacNeil stalked behind the counter and jerked a rope hanging down from a hole in the wall. Far back in the building somewhere a bell clanged. Halvor popped in almost immediately, wearing part of his debt on his back, and looking somehow so unlike the boy in the coyote skins that even MacNeil was startled.

"Yes sir, Mr. MacNeil."

"I have exactly twenty minutes to give you the lay of things, lad," MacNeil said quickly, "so sharp with your ears, or I'll box them for you. When I've finished my instructions, I want you to put on your coat and run down to Sammy Le Moine's, the Swampy living on the river bank. He's as old as Methuselah, but he's an expert—er—what you call furrier. Fetch him back here. Ask him the prices of everything in the store and make your own inventory from the prices he gives you, but adding on fifty per cent. That clear?"

"Yes sir."

"That's your price to the customer. Customers will come in with fur. Mostly Swampy Crees. Now you don't know fur, but Sammy does. Let him appraise it, and give you a price secretly, then you subtract—listen, *subtract* thirty per cent from that, and stick to it when you are giving debt to the trappers. No money changes hands at this trading post ever—it's debt. Always get the name of the customer, and refer to the ledger for old debt. If the fur the customer brings in doesn't pay off the old debt, kick like the devil and refuse him new debt. Call him a lazy trapper and a no-good skunk. But when he comes back next day, relent and give him just enough grubstake to carry him over the trapping season. Do you follow me?"

"Oh, yes sir—perfectly."

MacNeil flung a huge book on the counter. "All right, here's the ledger. Read—study it. If anything puzzles you, pray God for light." The factor placed a ring of keys on top of the ledger and pointed to one of them. "This will unlock the door of the spirits room—"

Halvor's eyes widened. "Spirits! You mean—"

"Liquor, you idiot. Whiskies, wines, cordials, rum. Sell none of it to the native trappers. That's the law."

Halvor smiled. "Of course, sir, if I'm ever in doubt about anything, I shall consult you."

"Like hell you will! I won't be here."

"You won't—" Halvor began. "You're not—"

"I'm taking the brigade to Churchill myself," MacNeil said, frowning. "It's that important. Malburn sneaked off."

"Then please send me, sir."

MacNeil wholly lost his temper and boxed Halvor's ears. He was sorry immediately. The lad choked and had a coughing fit. MacNeil ran for the brandy, took a huge swig himself, then measured Halvor a thimbleful.

"Down this—quick! But remember, young man, I'm in authority here. I've given you a chance, and you ought to be grateful. Dammit, I—"

The door opened, and Dave Sterns came in.

"Everything's ready, Mr. MacNeil," he announced.

In silence, the factor flung on his greatcoat, picked up a pair of enormous mitts. He went over and took Halvor's hand.

"Luck," he said. "Move Sammy up here, bag and bones. Keep the fires up, lad. Remember all I've told you." In an unexpected burst of generosity, he leaned forward and whispered in Halvor's ear: "Two quid for a bonus. Just credit your own account."

SAMMY LE MOINE was truly a skeleton, and assuredly he was old. His skin had dried and wrinkled like old apple-peel. He had very bright, very black and very small eyes. He walked bent over and had to be helped along. He understood French much better than English, Halvor soon learned. He had worked in the store for years, and now had retired on a Company's pension.

Malburn grinned crookedly, sizing up Halvor, and wetting his lips. "I'm sick," he said. "Fetch more rum."

"A dependent," Sammy said proudly in French, "should I live a thousand years."

He looked that old now as he mounted the stoop, knees buckling, and put all his weight on Halvor.

"Thees ees lak home to me," he said, switching to English. "Thees ees gran'!"

Halvor admitted that it was something, sure enough, but he was still mourning the luck that had kept him from making the trip to Churchill. How could one ever become a great trader among the American Laplanders unless he could drive a team of dogs? He liked the outdoors, the reach of the snow and the rush of the wind through the wild places. He wanted to go gliding along on one of those large freighting sleds, cracking his whip and shouting to the dogs.

"Why you not take the factor's place?" Sammy asked, as they started work on the inventory. "You seek?"

"Mr. MacNeil must think so."

"You cough."

"A little," Halvor admitted. "It is from the effects of freezing in an open boat off the coast of Labrador. But my lungs are good."

"I hear about them—that Labrador. Some good husky come from there."

Halvor swung around suddenly and pricked up his ears. "Our first customer," he said. "I hear him outside. Sammy, I must depend upon you to grade the fur and price it. You are the furrier, and I am the clerk."

Steps squealed, and there came a great thumping from the front stoop. The door opened and stayed open. A man had trouble getting in, he was swaying so badly. He was the size of a giant. His eyes were glazed. He wore no parka, but his long hair covered all but the lobes of his ears, which were badly frozen. Halvor darted quickly past him and closed the door.

The man started toward the counter, changed course abruptly, went over to a wall bench, fell on it broadside, then rolled to the floor.

He was snoring loudly by the time Halvor got to him.

Halvor called to Sammy: "He is not hurt. Just drunk. Is this Malburn?"

"Et ees Malburn."

HALVOR dragged Malburn to the clutter-room and got him on the bed. He came out and closed the door. That afternoon he and Sammy did a roaring trade in fur, a beautiful trade—and a profitable one. Halvor kept busy entering debt and giving out grubstake: Mostly sugar, flour, baking powder, tea and salt. Also he sold traps and ammunition. A handsome young buck, giggling embarrassedly, debted himself ten dollars for

The musher saw a black shadow swooping straight at him, and instinctively threw up his arms with a scream of terror.

a tiny pair of lady's pants. An old woman, haggard and toothless, bought rock candy and crunched it between her gums.

It was an exciting afternoon for Halvor and Sammy. They ate a late supper in the kitchen, washed up, banked all the fires, smoked their pipes and thought about bed.

"We will bunk on the trading-room floor," Halvor said. Sammy nodded, and a few minutes later they laid down ground-tarps and spread four-point wool blankets over them. While Sammy crawled in, Halvor turned down the wicks of three large oil lamps. He left one faintly burning and blew out the other two. Within a very short time he was sound asleep.

A crashing noise awakened him. He sat up to listen, then sprang out of bed. Someone, undoubtedly Malburn, was coming toward the trading room, bumping into furniture and slamming doors. Hurriedly Halvor pulled on his pants over his nice new underwear, tugged on a warm pair of socks.

He called out: "Is that you, Malburn?"

His voice was lost in a sounding-board of snarls and groans. In the dusk of the room a dark figure came

snorting and blowing, treading heavy as a horse. Although Halvor couldn't see his face very well, he did see a blurry outline of it through the man's straggling-down hair. One eye, less covered than the other, glared balefully.

"It is Cyclops," Halvor thought. "It is the mighty giant in the storybooks."

From the bed next to Halvor's came a terrified squeak. Halvor walked over and turned up the wick of the only lit lamp so they could see better, and also because doing something was good for the nerves. His were jumpy.

TURNING around, he saw Malburn very clearly in the light. The musher stood near the counter tossing back his snarled hair. In the silence of the room—silent for the first time since Malburn's entrance—the big man took notice around him, like some stranger come in. For a moment he held Halvor in a penetrating stare, then Sammy huddling in the blankets, and next the towering shelves, and back again to the long barrel stove and the logs corded beside it.

It was as though he had suddenly been transported here from the maze and muddle of alcoholic dreams. He was coming awake like a hibernating bear. But something was troubling him.

"Where's MacNeil?"

Before he thought, Halvor answered: "He left with the dog teams."

"Who are you?"

"My name's Halvor Dahl. I'm acting clerk here."

"MacNeil take my team?"

"He did."

Malburn grinned crookedly, sizing up Halvor, and wetting his lips. "I'm sick," he said. "Fetch more rum."

"You've had enough already," Halvor said.

Malburn slightly raised his voice. "You have the keys, man. Get it!"

"I'll get you some coffee instead."

He started past Malburn, and a great hand clapped on his shoulder and spun him around.

"No coffee. Damn you, the keys!"

"I haven't any keys."

And in truth, he hadn't. He had put the keys safely away last night under the counter on a protruding nail. At the time he hadn't been thinking of Malburn at all. It was just a precaution.

Suddenly the musher locked one arm around his shoulders and held him in a ring of iron. With his free hand he searched Halvor's pockets. Not finding the keys, he bent his shaggy head down and bit into the flesh of Halvor's bare neck. There was a sound like tearing silk, then Halvor's agonized screech.

Malburn raised his head. "You can't stop me," he said.

He whirled Halvor around within the circle of his arm, placed one hand on Halvor's back and pushed with all his strength. Halvor flew across the room like a projected missile and smashed against the wall. He lost consciousness—though not for long. From a position on the floor, above the pounding in his head, he could hear great noises of destruction, and the snarling and cursing of the destructor himself.

The sounds all came from in front of the spirits-room door, a thick, heavy door braced with iron straps and hinged with massive steel. It was an ancient door, dating back to the time of certain roistering gentlemen adventurers who liked to have their liquor guarded as securely as their loves and lives, even the rich fur they bartered for. It was Halvor's guess that Malburn wouldn't open that door without a key.

He thought: "Thank God, he won't get in there."

RISING painfully, Halvor went around and out into the hall. Malburn had lit a hall lamp and had got himself a short iron bar and was attacking the old barrier fiercely and powerfully, hacking out chips of wood from around the big sunken lock. Already he had made a hole clean through the wood. In a matter of minutes he would have the door open.

Turning, Halvor limped back into the trading room, got down a gun from a rack, took cartridges from a wooden box and loaded the weapon with shaking hands. As he stepped out into the hall again, came the ping of metal as the iron bar struck the lock, then a grinding noise, followed by a crash.

Malburn had broken his way in. Halvor started down the hall. He stumbled over something. It was Sammy's leg projecting out from a pile of refuse Halvor himself had placed there when he had cleared out the clutter-room. He hadn't had time to dispose of it since.

Halvor knelt down quickly. "Sammy—you're hurt!"

"Me die," Sammy whimpered. "I crawl to hide. He come along behind me an' torture for the keys."

"I'm going to shoot him," Halvor said.

He watched the open doorway and pressed his lips. Suddenly Malburn stepped out, and from a kneeling position, Halvor took aim. Malburn was carrying a full case of Hudson's Bay rum hugged tight to his chest. Above the case was the brutal head—the next vital spot—and Halvor aimed for that, pulled the trigger. But Sammy had moved against him, spoiling the shot. The case of liquor came hurtling at them.

Halvor remembered no more until he opened his eyes in a strange big room, roughly furnished. There were cases of books that had leather bindings of long ago, and old maps, and pictures of traders with flowing beards, and odd-looking firearms, some of them covered with rust. There was even a sword in a broken scabbard.

Halvor turned his head. The sight that met his eyes disgusted him. Malburn was sitting in a huge armchair drawn up next to a table and was staring, foully, through uncombed dirty locks of hair. He was eating from a dish heaped high with tender hunks of ham, and washing it down with a kind of wine that flamed in the glass like imprisoned sunlight.

He paused just long enough to grunt at Halvor: "You can get out and help Sammy in the store. I've cached all the guns in the warehouse an' locked 'em up. I put you here in the factor's room till you came to. Now, get out!"

Halvor had trouble reaching the door, and more trouble traveling down the hall, one hand on the wall to keep his balance. In the trading room he had to sit down on the nearest bench. Sammy sat on the counter, eyeing him dully through wrinkled old lids.

"*Merci* God for you!" he said, mixing up his languages. "*Merci* God we both not dead."

Halvor stared through a churning fog. "What did he do to you Sammy?"

"Hurt my arm, but now et feel better."

"What are we going to do?"

"Jus' lak he say. He fin' the keys. He ees master—that dirty pig. So we wait an' keep out of sight so much we can till the factor return."

IN the next ten days Malburn consumed enormous quantities of food and drink, which he ordered fetched to him in the factor's room. He was mean and sullen and slept only in snatches, a few minutes at a time. Apparently he had not lain down once since he had taken over, for the bed was never rumpled; and Halvor, often awakened sharply from his own slumbers at night, straining ears through the dark of the clutter-room where he and Sammy now bunked, would hear the big man thumping all over the premises. What he was actually up to, Halvor never learned.

One morning near the end of the second week, Malburn entered the store and said to Halvor and Sammy: "Clear out! I will make such trade as you never saw before. I will have the trappers coming in droves."

Trade had been fairly brisk, a few trappers each day with their mid-winter catches of fox, marten and beaver fur. Malburn's first customer, a chunky breed, brought in a black fox pelt worth a great deal of money. Malburn gave him a free-handed pick of the shelves, then offered to buy the man's dog-team next day for a bottle of whisky.

He winked at the trapper. "An' bring your friends. Have them fetch all the fur they can. They won't be sorry."

Sammy took Halvor into the kitchen so that they might talk unheard. "Et ees forbidden, the liquor," he declared indignantly. "That ees the law of the Mounties an' the decree of the church. But the dirty pig ees take company's spirits for bait to trap the foolish ones to bring in plenty fur. Then he will steal an' run. That ees why he buy Michel Nekka's dog team."

Halvor nodded. "I had it figured that way myself. After what he's done, he dare not stay here. He'll be clear of the country long before our dog teams get back from Churchill."

"Long before," Sammy said.

Halvor's face was bleak. "And Mr. MacNeil will blame me for everything."

"Also me," Sammy said.

EARLY next morning dog-teams drove up to the post and trappers swarmed in, bringing armloads of pelts. Michel Nekka was with them and led his friends to the counter, behind which Malburn stood grinning, holding up a large jug of rum. He treated the trappers before the trading started, then took their furs and handed out goods with a lavish hand. To Michel, he passed a bottle of whisky.

"I need those malemutes. A good team, Michel."

"Ver' fast—ver' strong."

Malburn reached under the counter and brought out another bottle and handed it to the breed. "Treat your friends," he said. "Make skookum pot. Go and have a hell of a time."

Soon the trappers left, and Malburn ordered lunch. He ate and drank, then went out to inspect his team.

"He will leave tonight," Sammy predicted, "soon as we go to bed."

"And I will follow him. No matter where he goes, I will go," Halvor said grimly. "He won't get away or sell the fur. I would rather die than tell Mr. MacNeil I had failed him."

"You crazy," Sammy said and blinked his eyes.

"Why?"

"You cannot walk so fast."

"I have my skis."

"What ees that?"

"Norwegian snowshoes," Halvor told him. "I can go very fast."

"But not so fast as huskies, m'sieur."

"Faster than a dog team pulling a heavy load of fur," Halvor said confidently. "You wait and see."

THERE is a kind of starlight that needs cracking cold and Arctic space to give it a quality of brilliance found nowhere else in the world. It is the night-day of the Polar places which, having lost the sun, borrows from the far-off Milky Way and the close-by Northern Lights. Ahead of him on that long lone stretch to the hills Halvor had a view of a moving speck on a field of sparkling snow.

He was running in a flat, dead calm. On his back were three days' rations. He couldn't carry more and keep up with Malburn. As a matter of fact, Malburn was speeding along with his beautiful team and ill-got load much faster than Halvor had expected.

"I would love to drive those dogs," Halvor thought, remembering what Sammy had told him just before they had said good-by:

"Malemutes from bush-bred bitches. You will fin' them too fast for you."

"What is a bush-bred bitch, Sammy?" Halvor had asked.

"She run in the bush an' make love to a wolf."

And that was what he was following tonight—the whelps of half-wolf mothers and pure wolf fathers—powerful, dauntless, savage things—and a savage man, more like a beast than a man was driving them.

The hills came closer as the hours wore on. Near dawn, Halvor saw Malburn turn into a valley between two high far-flung ridges, and disappear. Halvor mounted the west side ridge in a series of loops and turns and struggled to the top. From the top he raced down for the better part of a mile like a swooping bird, cleared a twenty-feet-high barrier of brush in a long, flying leap, and took the next gradient upward with comparative ease.

Dawn came gray and dusty, the color of smoke. He could not see quite as well as before, but the valley suddenly showed him Malburn's team below, and he tensed and stopped short, watching the scampering malemutes and the musher humped on the driver's platform at the rear of the sled, loudly cracking his whip.

Halvor had no plan except to follow Malburn wherever he went and eventually, should his luck be good, report him to some Mountie at one of the settlements farther south.

But suddenly—revealing as a lightning flash—he saw another possible way to stop Malburn. The steep slope to the valley was contoured just right for a take-off jump about a hundred yards above the valley floor. If he timed himself exactly right, and gauged the forward movement of the team to a split second, they would all reach the spot below the take-off precisely together.

Coming down at terrific speed from his lofty height, he could wreck the sled so completely Malburn could never deliver the stolen furs.

"And for me," Halvor thought, "maybe broken bones or death."

The whip cracked again, and the voice Halvor hated came up clearly in the intense cold: "Mush, you devils, or I'll rip off your hide. You'll go till you drop. You—"

Halvor started down in a whirl of snow. There was a blinding, stinging up-rush of air. There was a momentary glimpse of the valley below. Then suddenly he was flying, soaring—out from the curving lip of the lower valley wall. It was a crazy, daredevil jump, and Halvor knew it.

Alerted, the quick-eyed malemutes swerved in terror. They had seen the danger before Malburn had. The sled swung quarter round, careening wildly. The musher jammed down the brakeboard, saw a black shadow swooping straight at him, and instinctively threw up his arms with a scream of terror. Halvor crumpled with the shock and fell helpless in the snow.

He got up stiffly. Malburn lay beside him, sprawled and broken. The malemute team had stopped fifty yards away and had started a free-for-all fight. Halvor had trouble separating them.

"You beauties!" he said. "Better him than you." Tears were freezing on his face. The frost of the fiords had melted away from his wide, dark-lashed eyes, making them strangely bright and intensely blue. "I am the musher now," he pridefully informed his team. "We will load up the devil and take him back to the post."

FACTOR MACNEIL stood outside to welcome him home on the afternoon of the following day. And there were Dave Sterns and the others, staring; and Sammy Le Moine, his dark eyes pitted against the glare.

"Well," said the factor, "I see you did. And by God, you did!"

"Yes," Halvor answered, "but I'm afraid, sir, I broke his neck. I jumped on him with the skis."

The factor spat in the snow. "Good jumping!" he said.

"This team is close to being pure wolves," Halvor told him proudly, "and they seemed to like me, sir, and I mushed them well."

Factor MacNeil frowned and looked reprovingly at Sterns, for Sterns was grinning.

Now what was the darned fool grinning for?

Wings Regained

A story of the great wild swans that follow our West Coast to sanctuary in the Far North.

by CHET SCHWARZKOPF

WHEN the whistling swan Tohwah, and his mate the pen, reached the coast of northern California early in November, they felt their southward migration was finished. A dozen pairs of the great white birds had left their nesting grounds in Alaska, north of the Arctic circle, when a mid-October sun rode so low on the horizon that ice formed all day and thickened during the night.

Led by its oldest male, or "cob," with Tohwah relieving now and then, the V-shaped phalanx of swans followed the Pacific Coast down from the north, along the shores of British Columbia, Washington and Oregon. Swifter than either wild ducks or geese, the whistlers with their average wingspread of six feet could fly upward of seventy miles per hour, if endangered.

Their trip had been a perilous one. Law-breaking hunters and wild animals harassed them when they stopped; eagles attacked them on the wing, while airplanes filled them with dread.

Illustrated by
JOHN COSTIGAN, N.A.

Two of their number had been shot; another was dived upon and killed by an eagle; but the rest arrived at journey's end in safety.

Now they were scattered along the coastal lagoons and stream mouths of the Redwood Empire, a variant hundred miles south of Oregon, in an abundant land that never froze. Here they would spend the winter and build up reserves for their return flight to the Arctic in spring.

Tohwah and Pen chose a secluded pond near Widow White Creek mouth in Humboldt County, where a concrete dam, erected long ago, im-

The instant that Tohwah and Pen burst free of their shelter two furred forms leaped out of the darkness.

pounded several acres of water. Sections of this pond had been seeded to food-grasses by a conservation-minded owner who lived some distance away. Fir, alder and willow coverts shut in much of it, and beavers lived there, and deep reed banks along the shore made the place an ideal retreat. What the swans did not know was that, on certain days, the pond's owner liked to invite his friends over to shoot.

The pair of swans were pleased with their new location. True, a logging railroad passed nearby, and on the other side of this was a hunting cabin that belonged to the pond's owner. But these were well screened by the trees; and the pond itself, with its succulent water snails and profuse food-grasses, quite satisfied them. Also, there were numbers of good hiding-places, as well as a small island in one neck of the pond, while the familiar rumble of the Pacific Ocean sounded assurance, a half-mile away.

At first, Tohwah and Pen were disturbed when the logging train made its twice-daily trip past their haven. But when they found it never approached the pond, they came to pay no more attention to it than did the several half-tame ducks who lived there all year. They could not realize that, while friendly eyes watched them from the train, in time word would spread to others less friendly.

The swans selected an alder thicket, intergrown with cattails and near the creek inlet, for their roosting place. For the first two nights they slept undisturbed. On the third night, they were awakened by a feeling of danger that made them restless. For moments, they heard nothing except the riffle of the stream as it flowed into the pond. Then came the very slightest of movements, close by. A pause, and the sound was repeated, nearer this time.

High in a fir tree, a great horned owl's hoot boomed across the night. Out in the pond, a duck yeeped and was still. Tension heavy as a nightmare brooded over the scene, waiting to explode.

Suddenly Tohwah's mind was made up. With a crash and flap, he and Pen burst free of their shelter toward the water. The instant they started, two furred forms leaped out of the darkness and landed atop them. With mad clamoring and beating of wings, the swans pushed into the water, dragging their attackers as these tried to slash through their neck feathers and reach flesh and blood.

But the coyotes had taken on bigger game than they knew — over twenty pounds of swan apiece. In seconds they were pulled into the water, where the swans had the advantage. Wings that could break a man's leg buffeted them until they wanted only to escape. They let go and plunged toward shore, hastened by hissing beaks that struck snakelike at their hindquarters, gouging out fur.

Tohwah and Pen retreated to the small island to nurse their hurts, while a bevy of ducks yammered in alarm. They had not chosen the island for a roost at first, because it had no thickets, and only a sparse growth of cattails. Now it seemed a welcome refuge, and they never roosted ashore again.

The horned owl swung down from his watchtower on soundless wings, crossed the pond to look, and swooped upon a hare in an adjoining meadow. He bore it back to the fir tree, screaming of death, while every creature on the pond froze in silence.

Next morning a man came to Widow White Creek pond. Tohwah and Pen got a glimpse of him as he approached from the railroad embankment, and they took to the air. The man watched the broad-winged birds gain altitude and veer out toward the sea. He shook his head in regret, for he was the pond's owner, and the train crew had told him about the swans.

Later he discovered tufts of drifting white feathers about the swans' recent roosting place, and reconstructed the night's attack. "Bobcats or coy-

otes," he thought. "Too bad; they'll never come back to this place now."

The man was a busy executive with a lumber company, and rarely visited his pond during the week. Few others came near the place, for he did not want it disturbed, and his name carried weight. Thus there were days at a time when Tohwah and Pen saw no evidence of mankind except the logging train, and they became more and more contented with their haven. Often they made flights up and down the coast to visit others of their flock, and would not see the pond's owner when he stopped by. But night always found them back at their chosen roost on the small island. Food abounded everywhere, and they were regaining the weight they had lost during their long flight from the Arctic.

It was the week when duck season opened, past the middle of November, that matters at the pond suddenly changed. Toward dawn one morning the swans had heard suspicious sounds ashore. But, as nothing tried to molest them on their island, they did not fly.

Just before sunrise, several loud bangs shattered the new day's calm, and the wild ducks took wing, crying alarm.

Startled, Tohwah ran the length of the island with outspread wings and launched himself over the water and into the air, with Pen following. He was putting all his strength into the getaway, when a blast and a blow knocked him into the water. Wild with fear, he tried to take off again, but could not. One wing was useless.

Men called out, while Pen flew away, but no more shots were fired. Faster than a canoe could travel, the big male swan paddled back to his island and hid in the cattails.

Figures rose out of the brush on shore. "Good Lord, I thought it was a goose!" a man's voice exclaimed.

Overhead, Pen circled anxiously in the growing light, crying with that silver-fluted note which distinguishes the whistler from his almost extinct relative, the trumpeter swan.

Then an even more terrifying thing happened to Tohwah. Two men got into a boat and rowed across the water toward the island—the one place he and Pen had thought safe. When their direction became obvious, Tohwah backed out of the reeds, and beating his wings and paddling full speed, raced to the far lower end of the pond. But the men in the boat did not follow.

"His wing isn't broken," said the owner. "You could tell from the way he flapped it. Looks as if only the tip is disabled."

The visitor who had done the shooting was downcast. "What a trigger-happy yahoo I am!" he said. "But I never dreamed there would be swans here."

"Of course not," said the owner. "I'm to blame for that. I forgot to mention them. In fact, I'd only seen them a couple of times myself."

"Look, Herb," said the visitor. "Why don't you close this place to any more hunting until that fellow heals up? Perhaps we can catch him and have a veterinary look at that wing."

"I think you're right," said the owner. "We'll finish our morning's bag, then call it a job until Mister Whistler mends up. He'll leave us fast enough after that."

But the appearance of the men had driven the wild ducks away; and for the next hour, only a straggling few returned. Finally the men gave it up and went to the cabin for breakfast.

They had been out of sight perhaps a half-hour when a white form materialized out of the sky, and Pen dropped down toward the pond, crying anxiously. Tohwah came out of hiding at the end of the pond, and headed back to the island with answering tremolos.

For several minutes, Pen flew back and forth over the Widow White marsh area at what would have been a perilously low level had there been gunners about. Then she dropped onto the water with easy grace, legs folded instead of braced ahead like ducks and geese. What may have passed between the pair of swans is denied mankind's best devices to record. Thereafter, Pen took up unceasing watch over her crippled mate, sharing the tragedy which had struck them.

But no more hunters visited the pond now. In fact, no men came to it at all, although a man who walked back and forth along the railroad tracks at times worried the swans. What they had no way of knowing was that he was the lumber railroad's right-of-way inspector, who had been asked by Herb to watch for trespassers.

Tohwah stayed on the island at all times now, venturing to shore for food only at dawn and sunset. Pen clucked and bustled about him, ready to sound the danger call upon slightest suspicion. At times she would lay her neck onto Tohwah's and croon to him with a soft wow-wow-wowoo that made the inspector rub his eyes in disbelief, and debate whether to risk telling Herb what he had seen, or not.

Herb and the inspector held a conference at the cabin at the week's end. "He flaps his wings," the inspector said. "But he can't seem to get traction. He's got a disabled wing tip, all right. I suppose we'd better catch him and look at it, eh?"

Herb shook his head. "That'd just scare hell out of both of 'em, I'm afraid. Tell you what, Elmer—I'll bring down a sack of whole corn, and we'll take some out to the island every day. You do the job on week days, and I'll take care of it Saturdays and Sundays. If we feed him plenty, he ought to knit up faster. What d'you think?"

"It's a deal," approved the inspector.

That same day Tohwah and Pen were thrown into panic by the appearance of the boat, and it was some time before Pen returned and the two of them dared approach the island again. There they found golden kernels scattered about, and began eating at once.

Within a fortnight, they had come to associate the boat with delicious food. Pen no longer flew away, but went only to the end of the pond with her mate. Tohwah stopped trying to hide, and watched eagerly while Elmer or Herb spread the grain. Hardly would the man reach the railroad embankment before both birds were back on the island. But Tohwah's wing remained disabled.

Then one day Elmer noticed an intruder's tracks along the pond shore and at the boat landing. They were fresh-made that morning, and, as there was evidence of shooting, he decided to stay overnight in the cabin, after telephoning Herb.

The swans, also, had seen a strange figure skulking about, gun in hand. Instinctively, they lay low in the rushes on the far side of their island, nor did Pen fly when he shot a half-tame duck down by the dam.

The intruder had come from a jalopy camp, attracted by rumors of big birds at Widow White Creek pond. He noted that someone had been feeding corn when he tried to break the lock on Herb's boat, and decided to watch. It was then he saw the swans, and was not long in discovering that one of them was crippled. But the sun had risen by then, and he was afraid to shoot.

Next morning before dawn the intruder was back with a snare and corn. He laid out a tempting golden heap on the shore nearest the island, set his snare, and went into hiding.

For some time the two swans watched in suspicion. But the corn appeared harmless, and presently Tohwah ventured toward shore to feed, as he had done in the past. He paddled back and forth in front of it, but all seemed quiet, although this was the first time food had been left on shore, instead of the island. Pen hung back, whistling querulous notes, but she was accustomed to the corn coming from men now, and could see no apparent danger, despite the change.

In vain he beat his wings and lunged hissing at the intruder. A blow on the head stilled Tohwah.

Then Tohwah made up his mind, stepped ashore and commenced picking up the yellow kernels. Hardly had he gobbled down his first beakful, when something seized his ankles—and he was caught!

In vain he beat his wings and lunged hissing at the intruder, who sprang out of the brush. In vain Pen rushed at the outlaw, to lose heart when he shouted and swung a club at her. A blow on the head stilled Tohwah, and the thief shoved him into a gunnysack.

He was running toward the railroad track when Elmer, armed with a pick-axe handle, stepped into his path.

"All right," he said quietly. "Walk ahead of me to the cabin. And remember—all I want is an excuse to knock your brains out."

They reached the cabin in silence. "Inside!" ordered Elmer. "Line up with your face to the wall and take hold of the molding over your head

with both hands. And don't so much as squirm—"

He picked up the telephone. In the sack, where he had been dropped on the floor, Tohwah quivered ever so slightly.

By the time Herb arrived with a game warden, Tohwah, who had been taken out of his sack, was showing faint signs of life. Elmer and the warden examined him, while Herb kept the prisoner covered.

"He should come out of it," the warden said, "though it's a wonder this baboon didn't knock his head clean off."

Elmer was looking at the swan's crippled wing. "It's lucky he was caught, all right," he said. "This tip needs to be wired in place before his wing can knit properly."

"Good enough," said Herb. "We'll take him to a veterinary."

"We don't need to, Herb," said the inspector. "I worked for a vet in my younger days, and we've got a first-aid kit right here, as well as leader wire. It'll be easy while he's still groggy."

A HALF-HOUR later, with his broken wing-tip skillfully wired in place, Tohwah was carried to the edge of the pond and released. Overhead, a worried Pen circled high and watched. The men gave the big swan a gentle push, and instinct prompted him to paddle toward the island. But it was obvious that he was a sick bird.

"That's about all we can do," Elmer said.

"Let's get out of here so his mate will come back," said Herb. "And come over to my house for breakfast. You should have a medal."

It was several days before Tohwah's consciousness cleared from the cruel blow that had all but severed his head. Pen would not go from his side as he drooped in a daze, although at first, when the boat came with food, she wanted desperately to fly away.

When Tohwah began to recover at final last, his appetite came back, and with it his interest in himself. At first he and Pen tried to remove the tiny wires that secured his wing-tip, but it would be some time before these would rust away and fall off. Finally, since the wires caused no trouble, the swans came to accept them as part of Tohwah's regular equipment, and forgot them. . . .

One day in the midst of a January downpour, Tohwah decided to fly. With Pen's fluting contralto urging alongside, he made a run down the pond, beating his wings and paddling with all his strength—and left the water!

He circled the tiny island beside his mate, only to have to land again as his wing weakened. But it was a start, and during the afternoon, when the storm had slackened, he tried to fly again. This time Elmer saw him from the railroad tracks, and hastened to the telephone, while the swans rubbed necks and crooned.

"I'm in conference," protested Herb, at the other end.

"Yeah?" snickered Elmer. "You mean the weather's too tough."

"Wise cookie, eh? I'll be right over."

FOR some time after Herb's arrival, the two men stood on the railroad embankment and watched, while an icy drizzle trickled down their necks and seeped through their clothes.

"Of course, we could make 'em fly," Elmer observed, grinning.

"Over my dead body," said Herb, "—and yours too, if they don't, you donkey-doctor!"

Then the logging train came by on its return trip, and its engineer blew a staccato of greeting. That did it, for the train rarely whistled at all in that secluded area. Into the air went both swans, to circle over the entire pond before Tohwah came down.

"'Twas worth it," Herb said. "You've made history. Let's go to the cabin and lift a warmer-up to their health."

Progress was slow, however, and it was February before Tohwah and Pen left the shelter of Widow White Creek pond and tried a run over the ocean. Thereafter Tohwah gained confidence as the mending wing gained strength.

And with wings regained, the faithful Pen felt an upsurge of returning confidence and freedom after her long vigil.

It was about that time that Pen began to lead Tohwah as they flew over a widening radius—a thing she had never done before. Her reasons were sound. The cob who led their flock was passing his prime, and when the change in command came, Tohwah would take over. So Tohwah must be ready when the call came to leave, in March.

A few Sundays later, when a harbinger of spring was in the air, a genial group met at Herb's cabin with their families. Interested guests were escorted along the embankment to look through the trees at the swans.

"There's a change coming," said Elmer "I've felt it for a couple of days, and the swans have known it longer than that."

"Do you think they'll go away then?" asked Elmer's wife.

"Sooner or later, of course, but they've been doing a lot of neck-craning and trumpeting lately. And the old man can fly about as far as he wants now, I think. The way his mate stuck with him was wonderful. I've learned a lot about a wild creature's devotion."

Perhaps it was the chattering and laughter that came from the area about the cabin. Perhaps Tohwah and Pen felt it was time to reconnoiter. No one could know. But that afternoon the men and their guests witnessed a splendid sight.

Calling in flutelike accord, Tohwah and Pen rose from the pond with translucent-winged strokes, silhouetted against a lowering sun at sea. Higher and higher into the blue they mounted, while a fascinated group watched from the cabin yard. Once the sun's rays made them reflect a shell-like pink as they banked below piled-up clouds. And then they were gone into space, while their elfin bugle-notes still echoed in the sensibilities of the watchers.

"Thus endeth the story," Herb said.

"I'm not so sure," said Elmer.

Three days passed, but the pair of swans did not come back. Although Elmer knew it was not quite time for them to go north, he began to give up hope. He continued to set out food as always, but the mud hens and ducks appropriated it, now that the island was no longer occupied.

At sundown of the third day, after Elmer had gone by for the last time, Tohwah and Pen returned to their island. Corn had been spread late that afternoon, and some of it remained, which they gobbled hungrily. Tohwah's wing was as strong as ever now, and they settled for the night with cheerful chatter and ado.

They had been up and down the coast, among members of their flock, to pass the word that Tohwah was healed. And when the big white birds returned to their nesting grounds along the Arctic Ocean, he would be ready to go—and take command when the time came. All was right with their world again.

IT was there Elmer found them, while on his early inspection run. Although this was not the regular feeding time, he filled a measure with corn and got into the boat. Tohwah and Pen watched him with interest, but did not leave the island until he was halfway out to it. Then they paddled about in the middle of the pond, eying the familiar man and boat, and giving an occasional chuckle which to Elmer sounded like a greeting from old friends.

Before Elmer had returned the boat to its mooring place, the swans were back on the island feeding. For some time, the man watched, pleased as he rarely had been. Then he unlocked the cabin and picked up the telephone.

"And my money says they'll come back every year," he told a listening Herb. "Now they know where they belong."

"I've got a right in here, I own this club," Perry said. "You can't own footballers, not really," said Wally.

An old man of thirty-eight, he came back to talk about a television idea—and woke up to find himself hired for the season as a place-kicker.

No

by JOEL REEVE

WALLY WALLACE strolled through the door labeled *Lindsay Associates* and stood a moment getting his bearings. There was a new door cut through. The lettering on it spelled *Molly Maye.* He balanced his spare, sturdy form, looking at the name.

There was a red-haired receptionist who was looking at him with some interest, a very pretty girl. Wally said: "Tell Mr. Lindsay that Mr. Wallace is here to see him."

The new door opened as though on cue, and Molly came out. She had papers in her hand and wore a small frown. She almost bumped into Wally.

Then she stepped back and looked up at him, and her preoccupation fled, and for a moment it was like five years ago. They stood and stared at one another, and time evaporated.

Wally gathered himself and broke the spell. "Hiya, Molly? You're looking great as ever."

She said uncertainly: "I thought you were out West."

"I was. Met old John Ganzler out there, and we cooked up something." He almost told her all about it, then remembered. It was no good to tell her his ideas. She had no respect for anything he might dream up. They had split on this rock five years back.

"Ganzler? The old sports-writer?" Suddenly she changed. Her smile thinned: that well-remembered look was back in her eyes. She said: "Oh! Well—Perry will see you, of course."

"Why not?" He did not understand her sudden coolness; but he was, he told himself, disinterested in her whims. That was all over, long since. "I see you got your name on a door. You must be doing good, Molly."

"This television business is very big," she said.

Again he almost blurted out that he was aware of this fact, that he was here because television seemed to offer him his chance in a world he had never been quite able to battle. But he had been hurt by her too often—he had hurt her too often.

He said: "That's fine. Good to see you, Molly."

The receptionist was saying smoothly: "Mr. Lindsay will see you, Mr. Wallace."

Molly went out. Wally looked at the red-haired girl. He grinned and winked, and the girl said: "I saw you play often when I was a—when you were with the Mastodons. You were the greatest, Mr. Wallace."

"Thank you for not saying it was when you were a child," Wally bowed. He went into the office which had no name on the door.

It was a beautiful office. It held a concealed refrigerator, a luxurious couch of white leather, chairs to match. The carpet was green and deep like unmowed hay. Behind the huge desk Perry Lindsay was rising, a welcoming smile on his lean, ugly face. The young millionaire was slim and slight and full of nervous energy and intentions of good deeds, clear-eyed, earnest, sincere.

"You big tramp! I knew you'd come in! I was going to call you, but who knew where you were? So I just waited, knowing that you would show up."

SAFE RETURN

"You knew nothing," said Wally. He broke loose from the friendly grasp and put his topcoat on one of the chairs. "I've been out in the woods with old John Ganzler."

"GETTING in shape, I hope," interrupted Lindsay.

"Are you kidding? In shape for what?" Wally was puzzled.

"Oh—come on, pal. You know I bought the Mastodons the other day—controlling interest, that is. You know the way I always felt about you—always thought you should stay in the game."

Wally said: "Now, wait a minute. I came in here about a television show John and I dreamed up—" He realized now why Molly had cooled off. She had thought he was back, hat in hand, looking for a football job. She believed he had finally given in, returned to take a hand-out. Lindsay was rattling on, but he scarcely heard what his old friend and admirer was saying.

"Just because you had a silly fight and announced you were through with the game—always blamed George

"You—you football bum! You're not any good to the Mastodons."

for that. I want you back—and I've got an idea."

It had been a silly fight, all right. It had been because Wally was through and wouldn't admit it, and because nobody else had realized he was through, and because George had accused him of dogging it, and his temper had run away. He had controlled that temper pretty well, but it was a hot one, and it had boiled over. Then he had slugged George and quit.

He said to Perry Lindsay: "Look, I'm glad you finally got your nose into football. But I came here about a TV program. Ganzler and I have doped out a program—on sports, see? Great past events, recreated. John saw them all—we film them, and I do the narration. It's a sure thing for sports fans."

Lindsay said in his kindly fashion: "Sounds great, Wally. But Molly handles all the TV business. I'm up to my ears in rebuilding the Mastodons."

"Molly, huh?"

Lindsay lost some of his ebullience for a moment. He said: "She won't marry me, either. She just makes money for me."

"I see." Wally's voice was flat.

Lindsay said carefully: "Why don't you let Ganzler handle the TV thing—talk it over with Molly?"

"Yeah," said Wally. "Sure." His spirits sank to zero. No idea of his would ever entrance Molly Maye. He had tried the show elsewhere and failed for lack of sports knowledge or interest among the agencies which control TV time. Lindsay had been his ace in the hole.

Perry said: "What I want—I want you on the club."

"No!" said Wally. "I've never wanted to coach."

"Not as coach. George is all right—for now." Lindsay leaned back, pleased with himself. "I want you on the active-player list."

"You *must* be kidding," said Wally. "I'm thirty-eight!"

"You were the greatest Mastodon," said Lindsay. "You were the idol of every Mastodon fan. You did everything on the football field except carry the bucket. I want you out there wearing 99."

"You're pretty silly." Wally got up, reached for his coat. The script for the first show was folded in the breast pocket. His fingers touched it.

Lindsay said: "In a pig's eye I'm silly. You kick off. It's the age of specialists. You boot conversions. Nobody ever gets to touch you. You wear 99 on your jersey."

"I'm a hippodrome. A museum piece. . . . *No!*"

"We haven't got a good place-kicker," said Lindsay. "I'll pay you six thousand for the remainder of the season, Wally."

"You're nuts." Wally put the coat over his arm.

"Eight thousand." Perry's eyes were very bright. He was a nice fellow, but he either got what he wanted—and paid for it—or he was forever an enemy.

"Eight grand?" It would put the show on film. Old John Ganzler, seedy, needy, decent, had worked hard, believed in the idea. Eight thousand, they had found, would make a pilot film. Once the dunderheads saw it, breathed the flavor of the Ganzler magic where sports were concerned—

Perry Lindsay said: "No strings attached. If you get hurt, by any chance—it still goes."

Wally drew a deep breath. "I swore I'd turned my back on it. I swore that there was no return for me."

"You were wrong," said Lindsay. "Admit it—and come back."

"I wasn't wrong," said Wally. "But—I'll take it."

When the contract was signed, he went into the outer office, and the red-haired girl said: "Miss Maye went to lunch."

"Thank *you*," said Wally. The receptionist had seen it, then. It still showed on them, Molly and Wally. Nobody could miss it; everyone had thought it was all arranged, had taken it for granted—and it still looked that way. Something chemical, he thought confusedly, something neither could help.

In defiance he said: "Would you like some lunch?"

Her name was Eileen Massey, and she was cute and smart and ambitious. Very ambitious, he found. She was certain that she could work up to a job like Molly's—and she was much younger than Molly. She was all business—but she was attracted to Wally. He knew—he could always tell. The trouble was, he could never respond.

George Windsor was big and tough, a rock of a man with a broken nose and a harsh mouth. He said: "Nobody wants you—you know that."

Wally said: "You still think I dogged it?"

"No," said George. "You were washed up—and that was six years ago."

Wally said: "I'm on the club. We might as well get things straight. I'm not a front-office spy. I'm here to make a buck. You coach the team; I'll do what is expected of me."

The coach sneered: "You'll help a lot."

"I can boot them," shrugged Wally. "I tried it, in Jersey." Two days on a high-school field with old Ganzler helping had proved he could kick as well as ever. He was the lean type; he had never been too far out of ordinary good condition.

George said: "This club has been playing over its head. Why? Because it's a club. It's not a strong team, not young enough nor smart enough. But we win. Because we got a club."

"And I'm going to bust up the old college-try spirit?" Wally laughed shortly. "Some spirit!"

George said: "Nobody likes a free loader. And I know you." His voice rose, angry, sharp. "The first time you open your trap or start anything, I'm blowing the lid off this. I'll show Lindsay a thing or two: There's other stockholders—"

"Like yourself?" asked Wally quietly. "You wouldn't want to buck Lindsay's money and ruin the value of your stock, would you, George? Now, why don't you play nice, accept the fact that I'm here for the season, and go get me that Number 99 jersey?"

The coach glared at him. For a moment Wally thought the old fight was going to be continued right then, in the small office off the locker-room of the Mastodons.

But George slumped, turned and walked out. Wally followed him. They had several new jerseys with his old number on them: 99 had been retired with Wally—now it was to be revived for the multitude, used to prop up the gate receipts. Wally put the jerseys in a locker down in the corner of the clubhouse. He donned a sweat-shirt and took the field with the others.

They all followed George's lead, of course. Kid Preskin, the quarterback, was openly sarcastic. Wally got old Harry Hoskin, who had been a freshman in Wally's last days, to hold the ball for the placement attempts. Harry, finishing his career as reserve quarterback, was apathetic but efficient.

Reb Tolliver, the big tackle, was field captain of the team. He came directly to Wally on the field and said: "Y'know, Wallace, we like old George. None of us wants him replaced."

"That's fine with me." Wally's voice was curt.

"If anything happened," the youth said gently, "there'd be a lot of fellows resent it."

Wally looked at the big soft-spoken Southerner. "I can be licked, but I can't be scared."

"Yeah," said Tolliver. He had deep-set brown eyes and a square, dimpled chin. "Yeah. Okay, Wallace."

Wally kept practicing his placements. . . .

They played the Eagles the next Sunday, at home. For the first time Wally put on the new blue jersey with the number on its back. A strange feeling went with the donning of it. Blood ran hot in him; he forgot he was thirty-eight; he forgot the TV show. He stood straight and strong, remembering other years, Big Jake, Slammin' Sam, Moscow Moe, Dandy Fritz Shavinsky. . . . He remembered running the team, throwing the passes, running the ball to mix up the opposition, punting, place-kicking. He remembered the headlines, the record-books stuffed with his deeds.

And then he remembered the aftermath: The job-hunting. The inability to mesh himself into the complicated gears of industry. The farming that failed in a hailstorm, the selling jobs that did not pan out, the misery of failure after failure, tearing at his guts, making him lose faith.

He remembered Molly, who had wanted him to stay in the business he knew, football, predicting that nothing else would succeed for him. He remembered the final realization that they could never marry, never be happy because of the fundamental difference between them.

He relaxed, his shoulders slumping beneath the pads. Kid Preskin said: "Pads, yet? You need pads to kick off?"

Wally said calmly: "Scram, boy."

Preskin said: "I hope someone does get through. I hope some hard-runnin' back some day gets to you. I'd like to see you make just one tackle, Pappy. Just one!"

"Go away, boy," said Wally. "Don't heckle the men. Go and remain a boy—it's becoming to you."

Preskin choked on an oath, and Wally sauntered out of the clubhouse.

At midfield they had balls waiting for him. He walked out there. The October sun shone down, glistened on the number, 99.

At first it was just a murmur. Then there was a handclap. He reached midfield, teed up a ball. Nonchalantly he kicked it. The leather sailed low, rose. It cleared the cross-bar, splitting the uprights—a lucky one, at that.

The cheer began. It gathered force. He kicked a few more, and it was a thundering ovation. The darling of the old Mastodons was back; he could swing his leg; he was not fat and sloppy; he looked the same, running off as he got all the warm-up he needed. They stood and howled. He could see Perry Lindsay in his box, leading the cheers.

It was a parody, he thought, sitting on the bench. The other Mastodons did not look at him. He was a pariah among them. They believed he was a stool-pigeon for Lindsay; they believed he was taking a handout, they believed he was part of a Lindsay publicity scheme—they believed anything they chose, and none of it good.

And Tolliver lost the toss.

George looked at him. "Go out there, hero. I hope you muff it and fall flat on your puss."

Wally put on a headguard. He went onto the field. The Eagles were lining up, and he could distinguish Pihos and Van Buren and Pritchard down there. The Eagles were favored today. Wally teed up the ball.

For just one fleeting second, while he awaited the whistle, it was back with him, the feeling of being in there. He savored the moment, head back, watching the Eagles' alignment. Then he dropped his chin, waiting. The signal came. He took his run, as if going straight through the ball. He swung his leg.

The leather went straight, swung upward, veered a bit. It remained within the boundaries, began to rise. It went over the goal-posts, out of play.

The Eagles took over on their twenty. Wally retired to the bench. He sat and intently watched Van Buren plunge.

George was pacing the sidelines, chewing his gum. The Eagles began to boil over white chalk-lines. Van Buren looked as good as ever, Wally thought. The Mastodons sullenly gave ground.

Yet the Mastodon strategy was sound. They kept low, tried to funnel the play inside where Grimes and Haley could back up the beefy line. Wally could find no fault with them—it was just that the Eagles were very good, and finally Bosh Pritchard squirmed away and scored.

George barked instructions, and Preskin went on, leading an offensive unit. Hoot Melody was the runner. Jayne and John Colter were the other two backs. The Eagles kicked off, and Hoot ran it back to the twenty-five.

Preskin threw a first down screen pass to Jayne; then Melody struck for fifteen. Wally came to his feet, yelling. He forgot everything in the world except that the Mastodons were rolling.

Preskin threw a long one. Tote Evanski caught it and scored. George snarled: "Wallace."

Wally went on, and Hoskin went with him. Hoskin knelt, and the ball came back to him. Hoskin set it down delicately on its end and held it.

The Eagles line charged. They were coming very fast. Wally never lifted his head, never acknowledged them. He got the kick away.

He knew it was wrong the moment he booted it. He did not know the reason why—he just knew it was wrong. It hit the upright—but on the outside. It was a miss, and the Eagles led, 7 to 6.

He went up the field. George looked once at him, his teeth showing, fury in his eyes. The Mastodons went back to kick off. It was hard to stay in there and appear nonchalant, but Wally held his head high. He booted the ball out of play again, and the Eagles had to start from the twenty.

Wally went to the bench. George said to him: "I could have kicked that one myself. Nobody was in on you."

"I missed," said Wally.

"Yeah," said George. "Yeah, you bum!"

Wally counted to ten, then sat down. He was surprised to find his hands trembling, yet he did not want to hit George. That was all gone, that desire to lash out, explode his bitterness in the face of another. He hugged himself, struggling for control.

Several things happened. The Eagles scored, so did the Mastodons. . . . Between the halves no one spoke to Wally. . . . The one-point margin held. Wally kicked three other conversions. The Eagles won the ball game, 35 to 34.

He had dates with Eileen. They went to shows together. They ate together, talked a bit. She amused him, distracted him from the main problems with her seriousness, her youthful, defiant ambition. They exchanged a few views. They laughed a bit together.

He did not see Molly, nor Perry Lindsay. He was living in Jersey, with Ganzler, commuting to town when he had to. There was no necessity of practice with the team and when they went on the road he remained apart, working over TV scripts, reading, attending movies.

He continued to kick off and to convert point after touchdown. No kick-off was ever returned. He booted them all out of play. He did not miss another conversion. He became, after the Eagles game, an accepted necessary evil and the newspapers made much of him wherever the team went, especially the old-timers.

The Rams beat the Eagles and then the Wolverines beat both teams. The Eastern race narrowed down and to everyone's surprise went to the Mastodons by a percentage point or two. The Wolverines beat the Bears and the play-off, in the Mastodons' home stadium, was to be the pay-off of the season.

The Wolverines had not been on the schedule. Wally thought of the hard-bitten Western outfit; he studied charts and news stories and finally some scout reports Harry Hoskin got for him. Hoskin was the only Mastodon who bothered to pay him any attention.

The Mastodons were having their own troubles. Two linesmen reported injured. Preskin was pressing as the season rolled on and his disposition became horrible. Preskin was the ace, the passer, the spark plug. George began his old habit of snapping at everyone. Tolliver remained a rock and Wally found himself looking speculatively toward the big captain as the pay-off game rolled around and became tomorrow's problem.

Eileen had been very persistent about the television show and Wally told her about it. She asked him to her apartment for dinner the night before the game and fed him a steak. She had banished her roommate for the evening, he found. He was full of food and relaxed, his feet up, when she sat on a hassock before the fire and said: "I can get your show on."

He sat bolt upright. "You can what?"

"Mr. Lindsay asked about you," she said rapidly. "I told him about your show. I told him it was great. I reminded him that the Greene Hat Company was looking for a sports show. I showed him I could help produce—I've had a little experience and I've studied."

He said: "Eileen, have you gone nuts?"

"You needn't think I'm going to sit there and let Molly Maye lord it over me," she cried. "I only took that job to get my foot in the door. Molly has done nothing for the company in television. Your show could put us where we belong, on top. It would be a Lindsay Associates package. It ties in with the Mastodons, everything. And I can put it over."

He said quietly: "If I deal you in, you mean?"

"Why not? I'm capable. You know it."

She was right. Molly had for once missed the boat. If Perry Lindsay saw the possibilities of the show and Molly had not turned up anything, Eileen was in. Wally knew Lindsay, knew his quick changes of heart, his overwhelming desire to be on top. Molly would be out of the TV set-up and she would quit. She had been with Lindsay eight years, but she would quit.

He said: "Give me until tomorrow night. I'm thinking about the game right now, and the team. It's not going so well, you know."

Eileen said: "The Wolverines are two to one favorites. That Hanson, the halfback, runs like a mule, hits like an express train. He ruins tacklers. He's the Wolverines' club."

"You do know your football," said Wally, grinning.

"And baseball," she said quickly. "And I was a tennis champ in high school and I won swimming medals and I can beat you playing golf. Don't underrate me, Wally. I want that show!"

Ambitious, he thought. She was deadly serious. She was a pretty girl and she had brains. He stared at her and she fearlessly looked back at him. She was very young and she had Molly lashed to the mast and she was offering him the fruits of her victory—but mainly because she needed him, and the show, he knew in his heart.

Women in business were hell, he thought. He stood up and said: "Well—big game tomorrow. Thanks for dinner. I'll talk to you tomorrow."

She moved close to him, but he turned away and quickly left the apartment. He felt uncomfortable, almost trapped. He walked to the hotel at which he was staying. It was early and he felt sleepless. He walked around the block, then toward the river.

Molly still lived at the old place, he knew. He paced slowly past the door of the converted brownstone. He was able to think clearly now, with maturity, to associate things and file them in their proper niches.

Someone came out of Molly's house and instinctively he stepped back. Instantly he recognized Perry Lindsay. There was a frown on Perry's lean features; he looked as Wally had often seen him when something he wanted had been denied him.

Wally stood in shadow, waiting for the sound of footsteps to die away. He waited another minute. Then he walked up the steps of the brownstone and rang the bell.

Molly let him in. She did not speak, leading him into the small, comfortable sitting-room which had not changed in the years he had been away.

She said, "It wasn't kosher, Wally. When you came whining back for a football job I should have known. But even then I didn't think you hated me."

He said: "Nothing has changed, has it? Not your room, not you, not the way you leap at me with accusations."

She blazed: "That red-headed little hussy! I thought you had some taste, at any rate!"

"That's pure anger," he said. "No reason in it."

Even then he could have side-stepped. But he was suddenly stubborn. He charged.

"Going behind my back! Selling your lousy television show through her!"

"It's not lousy," he said gently.

She blinked, thrown off balance. In the old days when she had railed at him he had fought her back with harsher words. She bit her full under lip. She filled her ample chest with air. Her voice lowered. "No, it's a good show. Why didn't you tell me about it?"

"Because you wouldn't have listened."

"That's unfair! I'd have given it a fair chance!"

They looked at one another. After a moment he said sadly: "Molly, I wish I could say you are right. I wish—a lot of things. But it's not in the cards. I came to try and straighten it out, but here we are—fighting again. Maybe you ought to marry Perry and forget television—business."

The shot went home. She paled, then flushed. She said: "You—you football bum! You—you're not even any good to the Mastodons. You came back, took money—and broke the team's spirit. You may get rich, you may be successful after all—but you've sold yourself, your soul, your life, for money!"

It was unfair, in a way it was untrue. But it hit him over the heart. He took one angry step toward her. Then he wheeled and went to the door. He closed it carefully behind him. He went out and walked the streets until midnight.

He kept seeing her angry, lovely face, hearing her sharp words even after he went asleep.

In the clubhouse before the game the atmosphere was strained. George bellowed, cajoled, lectured. The Mastodons simply would not come up. They sat with lowered heads, mumbling among themselves. Hoskins whispered in Wally's ear: "It ain't George's fault. We got everything a coach can give us."

Wally nodded absently. He was still thinking of Molly. He was thinking of her overwhelming pride in her independence, her fighting qualities—the things he had hated in her. He was thinking that by giving the sports show to Eileen he could deal her a mortal blow. It occurred to him that Eileen deserved the chance.

He thought of the eight thousand dollars he was hoarding and what could be done with that. He saw Perry Lindsay walk into the dressing-room and wondered what was wrong with the millionaire kid.

Perry had never appeared until after the game. This was new. He saw George's face, mottled with rage. He saw Preskin sneer, looking pointedly in his direction. He got up and went forward.

He took Perry's arm and shoved him into a corner. He said so no one could hear: "Don't try to talk to them."

"They're going to dog it," Perry said thickly. "I won't stand for my club to dog it."

"I was accused of that once," said Wally. "It didn't help."

Perry said: "I've got a right in here. I own this club."

"You can't own footballers, not really," said Wally. He moved Perry toward the exit. "You go sit in your box and watch. Later, if anyone dogs it, fire him. That's your job."

He got Perry into the hall. The owner of the club said: "I've got my wires into this outfit. I don't like what I hear."

"Sure," soothed Wally. "It listens bad when you eavesdrop, some of these times."

Perry said: "They're scared of Hanson. George hasn't been able to get them up for this game."

"Just run along," Wally said sadly. "Your stooges could be wrong."

Perry stared at him. "Pull it out, Wally. I want this. You were the greatest."

"I was pretty good. But never that good." Wally grinned.

"I want the title. I'll do anything for you, Wally. Anything, understand? Just pull that title out for me."

Poor little spoiled rich boy, he feels a toy being snatched away, thought Wally. He smiled and got Perry out of the clubhouse. He went back inside, into dead silence.

He looked around. He said: "Those of you who have been running to Perry have upset the lad. You ought to be ashamed."

George was staring at him. Harry Hoskin whistled through his teeth. Preskin started to say something, stopped, took a long look at Wally, then cursed beneath his breath.

The call came and they went out. George and Preskin were the tail-enders and Wally stopped them. "Perry's ready to fire us all."

"Us?" George gulped. Then he said: "You never spied on us, Wally. I was wrong."

Preskin grated: "Who's been squealing?"

Wally shrugged. "Maybe they just wanted to make sure they wouldn't get the gate when it's over today. Maybe they got families and like Mastodon pay. Maybe you've been rough on them. Figure it out."

Preskin said: "Any rat who'd—"

"You thought it was me," said Wally softly. "You thought I was put on the club to spy on you all."

George said: "I thought so. I should've known better. It came to me when you tooled Perry outside just now before he could blow his yap."

Preskin said: "I wish I knew who's been stooling on us."

They went out on the field. It looked like always, green and nothing like the baseball park it was in summertime. It was a cold December day, but bright and clear. Wally said: "Forget that, Kid. Let's play a little ball."

George and the Kid moved a little quicker, their chins came up at the old, familiar phrase. "Play a little ball" was a classic understatement, a sports cliché, thought Wally. And precious little he could play. Yet he saw the warhorse come out in them.

On the sidelines George was saying as Tolliver went out for the toss: "Play a little ball, will you? Call yourselves Mastodons today. Forget the Sunday-school stuff. Just play a little ball."

Tolliver lost. Wally donned his headgear. George said to the ends: "Save yourselves. Wally'll take care of it. Ride down easy, you'll need all your guts today."

He went out. The Wolverines were giants, they were quick, they wore scarlet jerseys which flaunted their jaunty defiance like war banners. Hanson weighed two-twenty-five and had run the hundred in 9.7, Decker was no slower, Mahan a coach on the field. The line was heralded as the best pro ball ever saw. Wally looked at them, remembering the old Bears, the Packers when they were good, and he wondered. Who was really great?

The man who rose to the occasion, he answered himself. A whistle blew and he kicked the ball almost into the window of the clubhouse behind the north goal.

He went off and knelt, watching. He wondered if Molly was there. He had seen Eileen in the owner's box with Perry.

The Wolverines disdained trickery, coming with Hanson. The big back was murder, the line in front of him gave him chances to spurt through small holes. They would try to wear down the Mastodons, break their spirit, then romp home.

They came in spades, rushing, crunching. And the Mastodons met them head on. The Wolverines gained. The Mastodons began to melt a little at the inexorability of those gains.

Hanson scored from ten yards out, taking two men over with him. It became 7 to 0.

Hanson also kicked off. Melody carried back to the twenty-one and was dumped hard. Preskin yelped numbers, split his ends, threw a hook pass to Evanski. The Wolverines ganged up. Evanski, trapped, frantically lateraled. Melody took it and Tolliver threw a gigantic block—and Melody scampered the length of the field.

It was a fluke, a lucky score. Nobody was fooled by it. Wally went in to convert. He passed Hanson and the red-shirted big man said: "Pappy, you better get outa here quick. This is no game for fragile bones."

Wally shrugged. He aced the goal to tie the score. He went back to kick off.

The dauber was down. He shook his head. The Mastodons were not cooking, he could feel it along the line from end to end. He walked back, awaiting the whistle.

He took a deep breath. He ran at the ball. He put his toe under it. He hoisted it a mile up the elevator shaft. Then he ran down the field.

The ends, obeying George, were loping. Wally went past them. His legs felt the strain—thirty-eight-year-old legs. But he barreled along, looking for Hanson.

He was the greatest kicker in the world. The ball was coming right down into Hanson's arms. He saw the fierce joy in the big man's eye as he prepared to take over. Wally headed straight for him.

Hanson made the catch. He lifted those awful knees and began to scoot. He was jack-rabbit fast. He ran right over the first tackler and came up the funnel.

The Wolverines had every Mastodon taped, of course. Kick-off plays demand pin-pointing of blocks. They had not, however, bargained on Wally Wallace.

The old style called for a feint. Wally made it and left a blocker sprawling. It called for a draw-off, a leg thrown wide. He managed that, too. Then he went into the funnel where Hanson had to travel, for Wally knew the play, Wally knew every play once it got started and he could see its trend.

He carried no beef, that was the trouble. But he got into the funnel. Hanson, running free, came at him.

Even then he could have sidestepped, dropped on a leg, hampered the big man until help came. But he was suddenly stubborn and perhaps stupid. He charged.

They came together on the twenty-yard line. Wally rammed up, submarining. His clever, knowing hand reached. The pain almost frustrated him, but he jabbed sharply enough as he went down, rolling, one muscular, lean arm wrenching Hanson off his feet, the other stiffly poking.

Hanson went down. Wally went out like a light.

The ball dribbled on the grass. Tolliver picked it up. He lateraled to Harry Hoskin and blocked and they got to the ten-yard line and were stymied there.

Wally awoke on the sideline. There was blood in his mouth and a lump over his eye and his ribs drummed with pain. He said to George, who was crouching over him, "They don't know how to steal the ball from a bread-carrier like Hanson any more, do they?"

George said: "I didn't myself. . . . I forgot, I guess."

Wally sat up. He was pretty numb. "What down is it?"

"Third on their eight."

Wally got to his knees. Preskin was going back to pass. The big Wolverine line came in, broke the box to bits, chased the Kid. They dragged him down on the Wolverine thirty-five.

Wally got to his feet. The number 99 flashed as sunlight splashed him. George said: "Hey, where you goin'?"

"I set up that score. I aim to get it," said Wally.

George protested: "But Wally, he smashed you all up—"

Wally was already on the field. Preskin looked at him, then nodded and walked off and Hoskin came on for Melody. Everybody and his brother knew the play.

Wally said: "We'll make sure of this." He walked away back. Harry

knelt a good twelve yards behind center. Wally nodded.

From the forty-seven, that made it. Wally estimated the wind, limped a step or two, swung his leg for practice. On the sideline he could see Hanson, standing, glowering. Wally laughed. Hanson was great but the rule says you must protect the ball all the time and Hanson was a bread-carrier.

"There's your three points, you tramps. And now—play a little ball!"

Illustrated by O. F. SCHMIDT

He poised. He gave the signal. The ball came to Harry like a soaring little bird. Harry dipped it earthward.

Wally timed it, took his step. He swung his leg. Big Wolverines were leaping in his face. He held his pose, head down, not looking, feeling the tingle in his toe. The ball went winging.

He did not have to look. He heard it, heard the crowd. He felt Tolliver's big hand, gentle upon him. His ribs were burning his middle all to crisp ashes.

He said, "There's your three points, you tramps. And now—play a little ball!"

He collapsed, then. They brought out a stretcher. He did not know about that.

It was a white room, antiseptic in odor, and there were people around. A precise voice was saying: "Broken ribs are not fatal. If he had been hit again—but he was not."

He was taped. He recognized that feeling from olden days. They had given him something for pain, he dimly remembered. He fought it off.

Perry Lindsay bent over him. "Okay, Wally?"

"The score?" demanded Wally.

"31 to 28," said Perry. "We never lost the three-point lead. We stood off Hanson on the five three times. Then Hoskin stole the ball from him and broke it up for good."

"Bread-carrier," muttered Wally. His vision cleared and he saw Eileen. Then he saw Molly, just inside the door, white-faced. He lifted his voice, "Well, you owe me something, Perry."

"Anything!"

Wally said, "The show—the sports show. Eileen deserves a break. But Molly—without Molly, it wouldn't be worth a plugged nickel. How about setting up a deal for them both?"

Perry said, "Sure, why not?"

"We'll all make a little," said Wally. "It's better that way. Eileen's plenty smart. Cute too. Bless you, my children."

He watched them go out together. Eileen had not objected to Molly's running the show, therefore she had even bigger ideas. Wally chuckled softly and closed his eyes.

Molly's voice said, "You conniving rat!"

He reopened his eyes. She was sitting on a chair beside him.

"Yes—ain't I the one?" Wally said agreeably.

"She'll get him," said Molly. "He's going already."

"On the rebound," nodded Wally. "He gets real hurt when he loses out. Eileen will be good for him."

She said, "Wally—I'm sorry."

"Are you?"

She swallowed very hard. "I'm trying to say it the way I should. Perry told me you came in to see about the TV show, not a football job. But he shouldn't have had to tell me. I should have waited and believed and learned for myself."

Wally said: "I should have told you. I was scared."

They were silent for a long moment. Then Wally sighed.

"All the years it took us to grow up. It'll be pretty great, though, now that we know things. Now we can appreciate a little happiness, can't we?"

"Yes, Wally," she said. She sounded soft, wondering, humble. "Yes, dear. We're safe home now. We're very lucky, Wally."

They held hands. His heart drummed against the hurt ribs. They were lucky, at that, returning to where he had thought there was no safe return.

"I was the one who found her. I heard the shot; she was lying on the floor. . . . Must I go over it again, Jerry?"

NEVER TOO

NOBODY ever looked less like Cupid than Captain Donovan. He was a big, muscular man with black hair, black eyes, pugnacious jaw and an explosively direct manner. On casual inspection, you couldn't credit him with caring a thing about birds, bees or biology. He was commander of the Los Angeles Homicide Division and his men loved him. He was tough to work for, but we didn't mind. Our unanimous verdict was that Captain Donovan was one hundred per cent policeman, and no cop can pay a more sincere tribute to his Skipper.

He was alone in his office when I walked in. He was sitting behind the big battered desk looking like a dynamo that hadn't been turned on. He said "Hello, Mason," and jerked his head toward a vacant chair. I seated myself and waited.

I was the newest of Donovan's men. I'd been a policeman only four years and had traveled the usual rookie road: traffic, beat man, radio car; and then, for no discernible reason, I found myself attached to Homicide. I didn't know what I'd done to deserve it, but there I was, and it made me feel good all over because, in theory at least, you've got to have something on the ball to be chosen for that outfit.

A murder-mystery novelette by a well-known writer whose first story appeared in BLUE BOOK—the author of the Florian Slappey series, "Romance in Crimson" and many others.

by OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

LATE

Outside the window back of the Skipper I couldn't see anything but a quadrangle of roof bordered by the four interior sides of the huge Los Angeles City Hall; just a square of roof and a lot of windows. It was eight P.M. and all of the lights were on.

I sat there, trying not to fidget, waiting for Donovan to begin. He took his time about it, but once he started, he didn't waste words. He said: "You know a family named Warren, lives in Bel Air?"

I said yes, I knew the Warrens.

"Went to college with the daughter, didn't you?"

"U.C.L.A.," I said.

"Weren't you and she kind of like *that?*" he asked, holding out one huge paw with the index and middle fingers tight against each other.

I said yes, we were; but I explained that that had been a long time ago when we were kids together, before the war came along and grabbed me, before I'd ever thought of being a policeman.

I tried to keep my face impassive, so he wouldn't know what I was thinking, though the Skipper always knew what you were thinking. He knew everything—or almost everything. He knew all the available facts about Dale Warren and me, but perhaps he didn't know how his questions had sent my mind and my heart skipping back to days which had been beautiful: days that seemed a million years off. No matter how things have been, you find out pretty quick that a young policeman and a Bel Air heiress don't play in the same league. You know that instinctively, so that when you come back from somewhere—the war, for instance—you don't try to pick up where you left off. You let it go as kid stuff, and try laughing at yourself for ever having been serious; and you card-file it under the heading of Pleasant Memories.

"You were pretty intimate at the Warren home, weren't you, Jerry?"

I said I had been, that they treated me like a member of the family. In the two years when Dale and I had talked about being in love with each other, the family had accepted me as being what I hoped I was: a decent, ambitious young fellow who might, some day, get somewhere. Never once in all that time had I detected the faintest hint of snobbishness in or around the Bel Air mansion. If my origin was more humble than Dale's—if I'd been raised in a five-room cottage rather than in a palace that had sixteen rooms, six baths, a swimming pool and a tennis court—no member of the family had ever made me feel it. I never had to pretend to be something I wasn't. You don't meet many folks like that; but when you do—they're worth knowing. Looking back, I've often figured that I was the snobbish one, silly as that sounds.

"You ever meet Mr. Warren's second wife?" asked Donovan.

I said I hadn't. I understood they'd been married only three years, and I hadn't been around during that time. I explained that I knew the old man—Douglas H. Warren—and the son, Kirk, as well as Dale.

"Got a job for you," said the Skipper, looking straight at me with those keen black eyes of his. "You ain't gonna like it."

I waited.

"Just about an hour ago," he said, "someone killed the second Mrs. Warren. You hear about it?"

I shook my head. I explained I'd just come in with Danny Carson: we'd been interrogating some people in Long Beach who might have known something about a murder case we hadn't been able to crack. They might have known, but they didn't. I had walked into the office, and they'd told me the Skipper was waiting.

I DIDN'T say anything about how I felt. I didn't know the young Mrs. Sylvia Warren, who would now be referred to in all our reports as "the victim." I'd read about her, of course, because anything Douglas H. Warren did was of importance in Los Angeles; but I didn't know her.

"Murder?" I asked.

"Could be. I've been out there with some of the boys. Crime lab has looked it over. The family tells about an intruder who they say did the shooting. Their story doesn't hold water."

"Why?"

"It simply doesn't. Though I'm admitting it *could* be true. People get excited when something like that happens. Even the truth can sound bad. What we need is someone on the job who knows those people, someone who can say for sure whether they're telling the truth."

I was thinking hard and saying nothing. I didn't like any part of this assignment. I had expected never again to see Dale Warren; I'd taught myself not to think about her too much; and so the idea of barging into her home as a detective was a little tough to absorb instantly.

"Don't like it, do you, Jerry?" That was Donovan.

"No sir."

"Makes you feel like a heel: capitalizing on your friendship, their past hospitality. That it?"

"Yes."

"Wrong slant, kid. We're not trying to crucify anybody. But if someone in that family killed Sylvia Warren, we've a right to know. So has the public. If they're clear, you're doing them a favor just by establishing that."

"It's taking advantage—"

"Skip it. I wouldn't be using you if there was any other way. You're the only man in the Department who can make a reasonable estimate. You know those people. You'll know whether they're telling the truth or lying. Maybe you'll even find out why."

I drew a deep breath. "Why couldn't the intruder story be true, Skipper?"

"No motive. Nothing stolen. Of course, he could have got scared—shot her, and lammed. But it doesn't figure that way."

"Isn't it still more plausible than that a member of the family should have killed her?"

"I don't know." Donovan picked up a couple of sheets of paper covered with typewriting. He said: "When old man Warren married a second wife twenty-two years younger than he was, he made a bad buy. Way I get it, she was mean, extravagant, vain, arrogant, quarrelsome. Lots of fighting in that house. We get it she threw things: you know what I mean."

Yes, I knew: a woman with an ungovernable temper. But it didn't mesh with what I remembered of the tranquil Warren home. It didn't belong.

"It was her second marriage too," the Skipper went on. "Her first husband was killed in Sicily. She got his insurance—quite a hunk of it, altogether. The servants say that she could be sweet when she found it worth while—and she was pretty enough. Probably she found it not too difficult to hook a man like Douglas H. Warren."

"That still doesn't signify—"

"It doesn't signify anything, Jerry. You're not being sent out there to prove a point. You find out what you can, make your own estimate, and pass it along. I'm sending Lieutenant Marty Walsh along with you. He's a good man, one of our best. He'll do the detective work, but otherwise keep in the background. To them he'll be just another cop. You'll be on a different basis. Anything turns up, discuss it with Marty. He's been briefed. He's experienced, and will know how to handle things; but within reason, he'll defer to you. Remember this, kid: all you're after is the truth. If the Warrens are clean, you'll be doing them a big favor."

I got up. I said I'd do it, but I still wasn't happy. I waited for him to make a speech about the oath I'd taken when I became a policeman; I waited for him to sound off about upholding the law and all that sort of stuff. But he didn't do anything like that. He said simply: "I tried to think of a different approach, Jerry. I drew a blank. Now it's your baby. Go to it."

I stepped into the other office, and the boys quit whatever they were doing to look me over. They didn't say anything, but I knew what they were thinking. The word had got around. I should have felt all pepped up over being so important, but that wasn't how it hit me. I felt like a double-dyed louse, even though my common sense told me that the Skipper was right.

I could have refused. Knowing the Skipper, I think he might have accepted my refusal and let it drop there. But I didn't try. It wasn't any devotion to duty or any other noble emotion which sent me on my way. It was just that I've always had an oversharp sense of right and wrong. If somebody in the Warren household had stepped that far out of line, and if they'd concocted a wrong story, it should be brought out. My feelings were personal, not professional. I was afraid to meet Dale Warren again, afraid of reviving a lot of ideas which I thought had been swept out. Then I knew I was taking an extreme view. The family would know I was there as a policeman; they'd handle me that way. If there was reason for them to be cautious, they'd have a double guard up against me.

Marty Walsh joined me. He was a short, slender, wiry, compact man with brown hair and sharp brown eyes. He'd been on the job fifteen years and still looked like a kid. He said: "All set, Mason?"

I nodded. We went down the winding stairway to the garage in the basement of the City Hall. We took an undercover car, one without red light or siren. Just a couple of guys in plain clothes going for a ride.

On the way out, Marty told me a few facts he'd got over the phone from the boys on the scene. He said by the time we got there, the routine stuff would probably be finished with: dusting for prints, footprint casts, pictures, measurements, that sort of thing. He figured the body would have already been taken away. But the family was being held in the house. That was so I'd have a good time.

"Skipper said that she was shot," I said.

"Yeh. By someone standing close. Powder burns, the technical boys said. Probably a .32."

"They find the gun?"

"Nope. It's the only thing that makes their story of an intruder look plausible." He lighted a cigarette. "One of the maids says she thinks Mrs. Warren had a gun. A .32."

"So?"

"If she did, and if she kept it hidden, how would an intruder know where to find it? We also understand there was a big family row right after dinner. The boys found tiny pieces of broken china in the library, in the hall and in Mrs. Warren's bedroom."

"Signifying what?"

"Didn't the Skipper tell you she was supposed to throw things when she got mad? Well, if that's the way it was, how would that fit in with the intruder theory, and why would they try to sweep up the pieces of the smashed vases?" Marty looked at me and smiled. He had a thin, tight smile which didn't mean anything except that he was concentrating. "I understand you know the Warrens pretty well—or rather, that you did know them. That ought to help."

"There *could* have been an intruder," I said.

"Sure. He's supposed to have been in Mrs. Warren's room, and then to have gone out through the French door onto a little balcony and jumped from there. Lots of woods and open country in back of their property."

I said yes, I knew that. I asked whether they had found good footprints.

"Millions, approximately. All belonging to the son—what's-his-name?"

"Kirk?"

"Yeh. Kirk. He'd trampled all over the spot an intruder would have jumped to from that balcony. He had trampled all over the path the intruder might have taken getting away."

"What's wrong with that?"

"Everything. Even if you're dumb enough to gum up the works, you don't flatten out a whole area the way he did. A few of his footprints, yes. That'd be natural. So how I figure is this: Either there wasn't any intruder and Kirk Warren was covering, or he was the man who jumped from the balcony, and later went back and stomped all over the trail so it couldn't be followed."

"About the intruder—"

"Mr. Warren said he saw a man running away. Maybe he did—maybe not."

"And Miss Warren?"

"She heard the shot and found the body. Told her father and brother. They phoned the police ten or fifteen minutes later."

"Wouldn't that be a correct time lapse?"

"Sure, Jerry, sure. Neat as a pin. On what we've got, we couldn't break anything down. Especially if they're telling the truth. But if they're lying—well, you ought to be able to figure that."

I said: "How about motive, Lieutenant?"

"Maybe you can learn that too. We're sure there was a family brawl."

"The Warrens weren't the brawling kind."

"You don't know what the family was like after the second Mrs. Warren took over. Then there is probably another setup which wouldn't sound good to a jury."

"What?"

"Money. Old Man Warren is lousy with it. The Skipper talked to Warren's lawyer. He couldn't get anything definite, but he's got the idea that when Warren remarried, he drew a new will, cutting his wife in for half. Now that she's dead, his logical heirs would be the two children." He chuckled. "Don't fly off, kid. All I'm saying that a smart prosecutor could make it sound like motive."

I said slowly: "You seem to have made up your mind that she was killed by a member of the family. Does that mean you haven't really checked the intruder possibility?"

"Don't be that way," said Marty. "Of course we've checked it, and we'll keep on checking it. It's the way we'd like it to be. All I'm suggesting is that you figure whether they're giving us the whole truth—or any of it. We'll take it from there."

"But why—"

"Why invent an intruder? That's easy too, Jerry. Suppose someone in the family did puncture the lady with a .32. Suppose even that it was justified. The least they'd get out of it would be rich, ripe scandal. The newspapers would play it to the hilt. So, you see, the more innocent they are, the more likely it is that they'd invent what they think is a logical story."

We swung off Sunset Boulevard and through the main entrance gate of Bel Air. The road started up, twisting and turning. I didn't have any trouble keeping on it: You don't forget things like that in a few years.

BEL AIR is strictly top drawer. Anyone living there would be ashamed to pay less than a fortune in taxes. There's a golf course and a country club, and the houses mostly all have tennis courts or swimming pools or both.

The Warren home was way up high, and far out. There were a lot of cars parked in the vicinity, but I saw some black-and-white radio cars from West Los Angeles Division there too, and uniformed officers were guarding the gate. Nobody in, nobody out—except officially. Marty Walsh and I were official. They let us into the driveway, and I parked at the side of the garage, which was west of the house.

Illustrated by
JOHN McDERMOTT

"Got a job for you," said the Skipper: "Just about an hour ago someone killed the second Mrs. Warren. You heard about it?"

A couple of detectives came out and started talking to Marty. I was a kid, and didn't rate; but I listened, and it was all coming up as Marty and the Skipper expected. The family might be telling the truth, but they weren't telling all the truth.

I stood looking at the big, beautifully-manicured lawn, the lush shrubbery, the superbly tended garden. Homey, in spite of its size. It looked like a place where nice people lived nice lives, and not at all like a house where a murder had been committed.

I was postponing the inevitable. I thought I had conditioned myself to the job, but I was wrong. I was doing nip-ups inside. I was afraid of what might happen to me when I saw Dale Warren again.

The relationship between Dale and myself was something that no one—other than ourselves—had ever understood. It wasn't that we'd merely been two college kids who fancied themselves in love. It was that we had found something in each other that was strictly and exclusively our own.

For a few minutes it was easy enough to forget the cops and the atmosphere of tension around the place; it was a simple job to project myself back a few years when I'd been casually accepted here as a favored guest. The old feeling swept back—the feeling that only Dale understood.

The crowd we had run with was the crowd that belonged in places like this. They weren't stuffy, and they weren't wild; but they were sophisticated. Dale and I had checked in with the social ritual. Conversation was always smart, so we had talked and acted that way too. But it hadn't taken us long to learn something important about each other. We had discovered, with mutual amazement and delight, that we were both arrant sentimentalists.

In those days the young college crowd scoffed at sentiment. The

softer, gentler expressions we classified as corny. But somehow Dale and I learned that simple stock phrases weren't corny at all. No matter how we acted before others, we didn't crack wise to each other about moonlight. We weren't afraid to sit alone and keep silent mostly, and then to say that we thought it was beautiful; we weren't ashamed of ourselves for liking poetry. We even took pleasure in writing poetry to each other—after we'd decided we were in love. It wasn't good poetry; most of it was probably awful; but we were two kids fumbling with words, trying to express emotions which were too big for the smart sayings of the day.

That was how it had been with us for two wonderful, tender years. There were no barriers; there was no fear of the future. There was a sense of freedom which we shared by being ourselves with each other, by saying to each other all the things that the rest of our friends would have been ashamed to admit thinking.

So maybe that makes us sound like a pair of goofs. It's all according to the point of view. To us, it seemed rare and wonderful, and we lived in our own little world until the war came along and separated us. . . . And then the end of the war found us in different grooves.

Sure, I'd have been welcome at the Warren home. But I'd been living in a different world for too long; I'd acquired a new sense of values; I had developed a perception which I hadn't had as a college kid. And I had become a policeman, which is a far cry from what Dale Warren's average suitor should be.

I could have gone back to U.C.L.A. under the GI education bill. I could have got my degree in another year. But I didn't. In the Army, they had made me an M.P. When I came out, I wanted to be a policeman, and I became one. I had never regretted it, never been ashamed of my choice. All I wanted now was to be a good cop, to rise in my chosen profession. I liked the job; I liked most of the men I worked with. That's the only explanation I can give. But while I didn't have an inferiority complex, I still knew instinctively that things would have been different had I tried picking up where I had left off, and I didn't want them to be different. I had thought never to see Dale again, and now here I was barging into her life in a rôle I couldn't possibly like and couldn't possibly avoid.

I heard the screen door open, and then a voice that was just as I remembered it. She said, "Jerry!" and I turned to look at her.

That was my toughest moment, the moment when I realized that nothing had changed with me, and that nothing ever would change.

She was a tiny thing, just two inches better than five feet in height; weighing a shade more than a hundred pounds. At first glance you got an impression of fragility, except that I knew better. She had brown hair and eyes to match, and those eyes now were deep wells of trouble and apprehension. Oh, it was there all right; I couldn't miss it—though in those first moments I preferred not to think about it. She said: "I'm so terribly glad to see you, Jerry."

I felt awkward and embarrassed. I said: "I wonder. I'm here officially, you know."

She nodded. "I guessed. I've followed your career." *Career* she called it. That made me feel good. "I'm sorry you waited this long," she finished.

Marty Walsh and the other detectives had walked inside. Dale and I seated ourselves on the front steps. I lighted two cigarettes and passed one to her, and for a long time we sat silently, puffing fragrant little clouds of smoke into the night.

I waited. I knew this girl as well as I knew myself—or rather, I *had* known her; and I could tell that she was on guard. Finally she said: "You know in a general way what happened, don't you?"

I said I did.

"I was the one who found her. I heard the shot and went to her room. She was lying on the floor. . . . Must I go over it again, Jerry?"

"Please."

"The French doors were open. They lead onto a little balcony. The man who shot Sylvia had disappeared."

"The man?"

"The person." She turned to look straight at me, and when I met her eyes, she looked away as though afraid I might see too much.

"What happened then?"

"I called Dad and Kirk. They went out to see whether the man was still hanging around the place." . . . There, again, that insistence on *the man*. "Then we called the police. A radio car came first, and then the detectives." She started biting her lower lip, an old habit of hers when she was under a strain. That was all right. What wasn't all right was that she made a conscious effort to stop doing it.

I continued to question her. They had waited ten or fifteen minutes before calling the police. Another five minutes had elapsed before the first car had arrived. That was a natural, logical interval. I said: "What else, Dale?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Don't you? Hadn't there been some sort of a quarrel at dinner?"

"Oh!" she answered. "*That.*" She turned suddenly and put her hand in mine. But it wasn't the simple, spontaneous gesture it had been in the old days. It was studied. "It wasn't exactly a quarrel. Just a sort of family debate. Things have been that way for a long time."

"Your father and his new wife didn't get along very well?"

"Not very. I think they both knew the marriage was a mistake."

"Why was it?"

"The difference in their ages, I suppose."

"How did you and Kirk get along with her?"

She started to say something, changed her mind, remained silent for perhaps fifteen seconds, and then leaned toward me. "We didn't," she said. "Maybe we weren't fair to her, though we tried to be. After they'd been married awhile, and we saw that she was making Dad miserable, we developed an active dislike."

"No stronger than that?"

"Isn't that enough?" she asked.

"For what?"

She drew back sharply. "That wasn't nice, Jerry. You're talking like a detective."

"I *am* a detective."

I saw a trace of hostility in her eyes. She said: "We didn't dislike her enough to kill her, if that's what you mean."

"About this man," I said. "You didn't see him?"

"No. Dad did, though. That is, he saw a man running away."

"Too far off to identify, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"So even if we caught him, your father couldn't really help us, could he?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Where was Kirk when this happened?"

"In the living-room. I ran downstairs and called him and Dad. They went out to see whether they could find the intruder."

She seemed puzzled as I got up and took her hand, but let me lead her around to the side of the house. At my suggestion, she showed me the open French doors of Mrs. Warren's bedrooms, the doors through which the killer was supposed to have made his escape.

I released her hand and took out my flashlight. To a policeman, a flash is almost as important as a gun. I turned the light on the area under the little balcony.

There were footprints, all right. Too many. Hundreds too many. The area into which the intruder must have leaped, if there had been

"Dad, don't, please. You're angry at Jerry, and he's only doing what he's supposed to do. He's here as our friend."

an intruder, was flattened down with footprints. A trail of them led away toward the woods back of the property. Footprints that went and came and doubled on themselves, so that if there had been any others they would have been beautifully obliterated.

I said: "They tell me these are the prints of Kirk's feet—and of your father's."

"I suppose so."

"They inspected this little area pretty carefully, didn't they?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

She seemed puzzled. "I don't understand, Jerry."

"Your father saw the intruder running away—in that direction. If he had just killed a woman, he wouldn't be coming back. What did they expect to find here?"

She started biting her lip again. "Maybe," she said, "they thought he had dropped something. The gun, perhaps."

The explanation wasn't good. I knew it, and she knew I knew it. But I nodded and said sure, that was the way it must have been. And then I suggested that we go inside.

We went around to the front and stepped through the door. Marty and two other detectives looked at me and went on doing whatever it was they were doing. After a while I crossed the room in answer to a signal from Marty.

"How's it look, kid?" he asked.

"I don't like her story," I said. "But sometimes the truth sounds bad."

He said softly: "Look for the pieces of broken vases. They swept up most of the scraps, but you'll find signs of 'em. Two in this room, one in the hall and one in Mrs. Warren's bedroom. Must have been a hell of a fight they had."

I didn't say anything, but I agreed with him. Even allowing for what the servants had described as Sylvia's propensity for letting off steam by breaking things, the smashing of four vases in three different rooms, connoted more than a family squabble. And why, I asked myself, had the family been so careful to remove the evidence of her tantrum?

The lower floor of the Warren home was as familiar to me as though I'd never left it. It was a big house, but it had warmth and graciousness. I'd never known Sylvia Warren, and so she seemed no more real to me—no more a part of this house—than a name on a report at Headquarters would be. Marty Walsh and the other two dicks walked out of the front door, making it obvious that they didn't intend to interfere with whatever it was I planned to do.

That left Dale and me alone. It wasn't the first time we'd been alone

in that room, but it was the first time I'd ever seen Dale playing a part. She was trying to act like herself, and having a difficult time of it.

She looked up at me without raising her head all the way. That was a cute trick she'd always had—it made a man feel bigger than he was. She said: "I'm sorry we found each other this way, Jerry. I'm not exactly at my best."

She was trying desperately to explain something which wasn't explained that easily. But I didn't give any hint of what I was thinking. I said whatever way she was would always be right with me, and I put more warmth in the simple words than I had intended. She lifted her head and looked at me with astonishment. The faintest shadow of Dale Warren's old smile touched Dale Warren's lips. "That," she said, "is more like it."

She waited a moment and then she said: "You'll want to see the—the room?"

I nodded. She took my hand, but again the gesture was not spontaneous. It was as though she were trying to turn back the calendar; trying a little too hard.

In the hall, near the foot of the big stairway, I saw a tabouret, and my eye caught faint traces of broken china near the edge of the carpeting by the wall opposite. I tried not to let her see that I'd noticed anything.

She led the way upstairs and took me into Mrs. Warren's room. It was a big room, with two French windows, two little balconies, a large dressing-room and a huge bath. It was a gay, frivolous room, more than slightly overdone. It seemed to characterize the dead woman, and I found myself thinking that if I had been Douglas H. Warren, age fifty-three, the room would have served always to remind me of the discrepancy between my age and that of my new wife.

Dale walked in with me, consciously brave. She showed me where the body had been. The French doors on the right were open. The room was in order, except for little things which could not be removed short of a thorough cleaning. Things like infinitesimal bits of china where a fourth piece of bric-à-brac had been smashed against the wall. I'd never have seen it if I hadn't been looking for it.

I walked onto the balcony and looked down. Quite a height, but not too great for an agile man. It occurred to me then that Kirk Warren, Dale's brother, might have been the man in the room, and that he might have jumped from the window, and later sought to confuse the police by multiplying his own footprints. But then, why would he have jumped? Why wouldn't he simply have walked out of the door? And why would Mr. Warren have said he saw a man running away?

We went downstairs. Dale seemed glad to be out of the room, and I couldn't blame her. She said, "Let's talk a moment, Jerry," and seated herself on the stairs. I sat one step below her.

That brought the past back hard. Lots of nights when the kids had been partying in the house, she and I had sought sanctuary on the stairway where we were in full view of the others and yet absolutely alone. It was just another reminder of something which had gone, another touch to add to the illusion that nothing had changed.

"You're different," she said.

"Wouldn't you expect that?"

"Y-e-s. I suppose so. The Army probably did it."

"Why do you say that?"

"You'd have looked me up when you got back otherwise."

I said: "I'm not so sure, Dale."

"Why not?"

"I didn't think I'd fit in here any more."

"That's not fair," she said. "You know how we all felt about you. You knew you'd always be welcome."

I said yes, I had known that. But things had seemed different. They still did.

She said: "You're not making it easy for me, Jerry."

She looked straight at me when she said it, and I caught something which bothered me. What was she trying to say, I wondered, and why was she trying to say it?

The Army had taught me a lot, being a cop had taught me even more. I had acquired a hard shell, but I was learning now that I hadn't changed inwardly. I was still gooey with sentiment. By that I don't mean that I was falling in love all over again, but I knew I was a softie, always had been and always would be—and Dale was the only person in the world who knew that. With her, I'd always been able to let my hair down emotionally.

Suddenly she said: "The usual sum for your thoughts, Jerry."

I told her—not too elaborately. She flushed and looked away. "I've missed you too," she said simply.

"I didn't mean it just that way, Dale. I think we both knew that the way things were between us was serious but not permanent . . ." I was floundering now. I was saying more than I intended to say, and perhaps not as much as I would have liked. None of it fitted in with my mission.

She said: "It's good to have you here again—even this way. Tonight we need a friend."

The library door opened, and three men came out. One was a detective; one was Mr. Warren; and the other was Kirk.

Neither of the Warren men had changed. Mr. Warren looked tired and worried, but he was the same heavy-set, compact man with the same keen, friendly eyes, the same immaculate grooming, the same heartiness.

Kirk hadn't changed either, or maybe it seemed that he hadn't because I had changed along with him. He'd been a Navy flyer during the war, an ensign who came out a j.g.

They came over to me, hands outstretched. Mr. Warren got to me first. His grip was still powerful, his eyes level. He said: "Jerry! I heard you were here. . . . Welcome."

I thanked him and said something inane about being sorry. His eyes clouded, and he said they were all sorry, but that it was one of those things. I couldn't figure him. According to what we had gathered, he couldn't possibly be too grief-stricken; yet to have a tragedy strike as it had tonight wasn't something you could take in stride. It had to carry shock, but Mr. Warren didn't look as though that was his primary feeling. He was warm and enthusiastic—and wary. He said: "You haven't treated us very well, Jerry."

I said that he knew how it was: my work and everything. He smiled. "You thought because you'd become a policeman you wouldn't be liked as much?"

"Not exactly—"

"You're a poor dissembler, Jerry. We were always fond of you, and still are. I can speak for myself, at least, and for Kirk."

I turned to face Dale's brother. He seemed glad to see me, but he wasn't smiling. We shook hands and said a few conventional things. He said: "Drop around sometime, Jerry, when we aren't all messed up. I still think I can beat you at tennis."

"You always could, Kirk; and what little game I had has gone to pot."

Mr. Warren said: "Time was when I'd have bet we'd be having you underfoot all the time, Jerry."

I saw Dale flush, but she didn't say anything. Mr. Warren and Kirk kept up a running fire of personal conversation. It was all geared to the past, and was designed, I felt, to make me feel like a member of the family.

I tried not to make my words too formidable. I said: "They sent me here from downtown, so I've got to make a noise like a detective. You understand, don't you?"

They all said they understood.

I asked Mr. Warren to describe to me what he had seen and where he'd

been when he saw it. He told me about a shadowy figure running toward the woods—a man. He said he didn't know then what had happened, so he had thought it was a prowler, nothing more serious.

His story was perfect. It was precise and neat and all tied up with pink ribbon.

I said: "Where was Kirk when this was happening?"

"Inside the house," Kirk answered. "I didn't go outside until after."

"After what?"

"Until after Dale had found the body, and I saw that the French windows were open."

"Then?"

"I went outside and looked."

"Under the window?"

"Yes."

"Hadn't your father joined you by that time?"

"Yes."

"Didn't he tell you that the man had run away?"

Kirk looked at me cautiously. He saw what I was driving at. "It sounds ridiculous, I know, Jerry. But I thought he might have come back. No, to be honest, I don't know just what I was thinking. I was pretty excited."

"You loused things up good," I said, trying not to make it sound too serious. "We've got too many footprints now—and they all look like yours."

"It *was* a stupid thing to do," he said apologetically.

I THOUGHT over my next question before asking it. I tried to watch the three reactions. I said: "Wasn't there some sort of domestic quarrel here tonight?"

Mr. Warren flushed and nodded. He said there had been, but it wasn't important. "Unfortunately," he explained with disarming candor, "Sylvia and I quarreled often. Tonight was the rule rather than the exception."

"She went to her room alone?"

"Yes."

"Did she own a gun?"

He answered carefully: "I believe so, but I'm not sure."

"Where did she keep it?"

"I don't know."

"You never actually saw it?"

"No."

"She must have had it pretty well hidden, then," I suggested, and they all agreed.

"The intruder," said Mr. Warren carefully, "was most likely a burglar. Sylvia probably surprised him, and he got panicky."

"If he used her gun, how did he know where to look for it?"

Mr. Warren hesitated, and Dale broke in—too quickly, too eagerly: "Perhaps she got the gun herself and he took it from her."

I said it could have happened that way. Maybe I fooled Mr. Warren and Dale, but I didn't fool Kirk. He said: "You can't quite buy that, can you, Jerry?"

I repeated that it was possible, and said I hoped it had been that way. Then I said: "How much time elapsed between the moment Dale found the body and the time you telephoned for the police?"

They looked at each other and started comparing notes. Then Dale said: "We can't be sure. Fifteen minutes, perhaps. Maybe twenty."

"What was happening then?"

Mr. Warren's face had flushed. He showed the first trace of irritation. "Look, son," he said sharply, "don't try to exaggerate the normal actions of normal people under abnormal circumstances. If you want the details, here they are: We established that Sylvia was dead. I told about seeing the murderer run away. Kirk and I went to look for him. We returned to the house and tried to ease things for Dale, who had started to go to pieces. We discussed what we were supposed to do. Then we called the police. The whole time lapse wasn't more than twenty minutes at the outside. I don't believe that we were supposed to have acted more quickly than that."

Dale put her hand on his arm. She said: "Dad, don't. You're angry at Jerry, and he's only doing what he's supposed to do. He's here as our friend."

Mr. Warren exhaled slowly and audibly. He said: "Sorry, son. But I've been over it so many times with the other detectives . . ."

"I'm sorry, too, Mr. Warren. Especially if I went over the same ground they'd already covered. It's the way we're trained. We ask a million questions, sometimes over and over again. Occasionally we're lucky enough to see something that even the people involved may have missed." I paused a moment and then went on: "This is awkward for me too, you know."

Dale put her hand on my arm. It was a gentle gesture, and yet compelling. She was maneuvering me away from there. I let her lead the way into the living-room. We went over and stood by the fireplace. "We're all under a terrific strain," she apologized. "You mustn't mind."

"Of course I don't mind. It couldn't be any other way."

"It's really a simple thing."

"I suppose so. Unfortunately, we haven't much to go on. If anybody actually had seen the burglar. . . . Are you sure he didn't steal anything?"

"How would it help to know that?"

"It would prove that there was a burglar. It would give the motive for a stranger being in the house."

She looked up at me without raising her head: the same old routine which had knocked me for a loop a thousand times. "I doubt if I could ever tell you whether anything was stolen, Jerry. Unless it was something obvious. Sylvia and I didn't get along too well. I wasn't in the habit of visiting her room."

I tried to estimate what Dale was doing. Was this sudden candor real—or an act? I was sorry to be here, sorry to have been forced to the conclusion that all three Warrens were withholding valuable information, that the story of the intruder had been concocted because it would be most difficult to disprove. You either believed it or you didn't. I didn't.

BUT that wasn't all that was happening. The Old Man had assigned me to this case because of my former intimacy with the family, and particularly with Dale. I was supposed to capitalize on that. What I hadn't anticipated was that coming close to her again, even under these circumstances, would do things to me.

She said suddenly: "I've thought about you a lot recently, Jerry."

I looked surprised and asked her how come.

"The Far East situation: The possibility that it will get worse. You're in the Reserve, aren't you?"

I nodded. "Got out as a captain," I said. "I'd go back with the same two bars on my shoulders."

The maid appeared from the hallway and asked Dale a question. She walked away and I called to tell her I wanted to talk to one of the officers, and that I'd be right back. I found Marty Walsh on the veranda, chain-smoking. I touched his elbow and led the way onto the spacious lawn where we could talk without being overheard.

I said: "Do you believe the intruder story, Marty?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"It doesn't figure from any angle."

"Did you find the gun?"

"Nope."

"If there was an intruder, he probably kept it with him. If there wasn't, it can't be so far from here. The first radio car got here twenty or twenty-five minutes after Dale found her stepmother's body."

"So?"

"I suppose you've searched thoroughly."

"Sure. But that doesn't mean anything. This property abuts on open country. The gun could be anywhere. In the daytime we might

Dale went straight to the cave. I saw the gleam of nickel. It had to be the gun with which Sylvia had been killed.

have a chance, but finding it tonight would be sheer luck."

"Did Mrs. Warren have a gun?"

"Probably. It wasn't registered to her, if that's what you mean. But it could have been a gift. Maybe her first husband gave it to her. Just owning an unregistered gun isn't illegal in California, you know."

I said I knew. I asked him what he thought of Kirk's footprints underneath the window.

"They tell us plenty," Marty answered sharply. "In the first place, there are too many of them. In the second place, if there had been an intruder and if he had jumped from that balcony, he'd have made a different sort of print: a deeper one. There was no evidence of that."

"Then you think—"

"That Kirk was trying to louse us up? Sure I do."

"I'll ask you something else, Marty. This is just a matter of opinion. You never met these folks before. Would you say any one of the three of them committed a murder tonight?"

He said carefully: "Murder is a technical offense, Jerry. It involves premeditation. Whatever happened probably broke suddenly as the result of the quarrel they had at dinner. I'd say if it was one of the Warrens, it wouldn't be murder. Maybe manslaughter, maybe homicide in one degree or another."

"If there was any justification, why would they try to cover?"

"Most natural thing in the world. A family like this wouldn't enjoy the scandal. If they felt that whatever happened was justified, they'd try to throw the spotlight somewhere else. The easiest thing to cook up would be this story about an intruder who can't be identified. If we happened to believe them, the publicity they'd get wouldn't be the hurtful kind."

"How about the servants?"

"I can't take them seriously."

"None of them was upstairs at the time it was happening?"

"That's what the Warrens say. I believe them."

I lighted a cigarette and inhaled deeply. I said: "I wish the Old Man hadn't sent me out here."

"That's why he did it."

"This is worse than I thought. I used to be in love with Dale. I think I am again."

"Not so good. You're worried, aren't you?"

"Naturally."

"What is your opinion? Are they lying?"

I went out on a limb and sawed the limb off after me.

"Yes," I answered. "I think they're lying."

"Can you prove it?"

"I'm afraid I can."

"How?"

"Mind if I try it my own way, Marty?"

"Right now you're the boss. What's the play?"

"Let's walk back into the house. Get all three of the Warrens into the room with us. Start talking about the case: hold them there. I'm going to make a certain pitch, and then I'll walk out. My leaving will be the signal. If I'm right, Dale will want to follow. Hold her for about five minutes. Then let her go."

"If it doesn't work that way?"

"Then my hunch is wrong, and we'll make a fresh start."

He said okay, and started back toward the house. He spoke only once. "You're doing all right, kid. Keep it up."

That was supposed to make me feel good. It missed.

I had a plan all worked out. There was only one trouble with it. I was afraid it would work.

It was something I couldn't explain to Marty without laying myself wide open. It was something which was all tied up with my college romance. It was based on the obvious fact that—if the Warrens were involved—they hadn't been sufficiently worried about the gun with which

Sylvia had been killed. That could mean one of two things. It could mean that there really had been an intruder and that he'd got away with the murder weapon, or it could mean that they knew the thing had been hidden in a spot where finding it would be just short of an impossibility.

If a member of the family had hidden that gun, they'd had about ten minutes to work in. Just tossing it into the shrubbery wouldn't have given them the confidence they seemed to have. But if it had been hidden in a spot which was really secret. . . . Well, there *was* such a place, and I knew where it was.

Back again to Dale and myself and the old days. Even to tell about it sounds ridiculous. In my own thoughts, knowing what I knew, I couldn't believe that Dale and I had ever acted so kiddishly. A den—a hiding-place, a trysting-spot, a miniature cave for concealing notes. See what I mean?

In our two years together there had never been a time when Dale and I couldn't have talked things out, or have been alone as much as we wanted. There was never any valid reason to do what we did except that —rightly or wrongly—it seemed romantic.

There was a spot a few minutes' walk from the house, off toward the hills. I never knew whether it was on Mr. Warren's property or whether it just missed. There was a tiny ravine at the bottom of which there was a brook which was dry except after occasional heavy winter rains, and even then it wasn't anything to boast about.

No one walked in that ravine. It was rough underfoot, and definitely unbeautiful. The sides were steep and strewn with heavy rocks. There were little nooks and crannies and tiny caves under and behind some of those rocks. One in particular belonged to Dale and myself.

It had started on a certain February fourteenth when she hid a valentine there for me, defied me to find it, and then showed me where it was. It was one of those blatant, lacy things featuring a heart punctured by an arrow, and containing a supposedly poetic sentiment which our crowd would have called sloppy. I somewhat shamefacedly produced from my pocket a similar valentine for her. It was funny, and it was sweet. At the moment it seemed to set us apart from the others. . . .

A couple of days after that, Dale told me she had hidden a note for me in that little cave. It wasn't a cave, really—not large enough to get into. Just an opening behind a big boulder . . . a perfect place of concealment. I slipped away from the party, found the note—a gentle, sentimental thing; and the next time I went there I carried a note I had written to her. She went and got it. After that it seemed fun to do things that way.

If Dale was in the middle of this mess—and I felt strongly that she was —and if she had disposed of the gun, knowing that her time was limited, she couldn't have found a more perfect hiding-place or one less likely to be discovered. I doubted then, and I still doubt, if even the most meticulous searchers would have thought of looking there. The Glade, as we had called it, wasn't on the route to anywhere. A gun hidden there would have been safe at least long enough for the hue and cry to die down, at which time it could be more efficiently disposed of.

Another thing that made it logical for Dale to have hidden it in the Glade—whether she was doing it for her father, her brother or herself—was that she had no reason to expect I'd be assigned to the case. If I was correct in my hunch, then my presence must have disturbed her. She would know I'd eventually remember it, and that I'd look there.

We gathered in the living-room: the three Warrens, Marty Walsh and myself. All of us, except Marty, showed signs of strain. One of the servants brought in some coffee, and it tasted mighty good. We talked about the case because there didn't seem to be much else to talk about. Mr. Warren continued to insist that he had seen a man running away. The details he gave indicated that the man hadn't been anywhere near the Glade. I said: "Of course, you may just have imagined that, Mr. Warren."

"I'm sure I saw him."

I said, deliberately: "Don't take offense at this, but we have to investigate all angles. As soon as daylight comes, we'll get a bunch of men out here and really search the grounds and the adjoining land. The gun could be hidden, or it could have been tossed away. Right, Marty?"

"Sure," said Lieutenant Walsh, picking up my cue. "That'd be routine."

I said casually: "The two radio officers who got here first, are they still outside?"

Marty said they were. I got up and started for the door. I said I wanted to chat with them.

I walked, somewhat ostentatiously, down the driveway. The officers were there, all right, somewhat bored and weary. I stood where I could be seen from the house, and called one of the officers to me. I said: "Pretend we're talking about something important. And while we're talking, let's move over behind those bushes so that anybody watching from the house will get the idea we're still here."

Our disappearance was neatly handled. If Dale was watching me, this would be her chance to go to the Glade through the back entrance, get the gun and hide it somewhere else—anywhere else.

I took off alone in a straight line, still concealed from the house. I went through a high hedge, turned right, and followed the hedge until I knew I could no longer be seen from the house. Then I crawled back into the grounds and started for the Glade.

I felt like a heel. I wasn't sure what I'd do if Dale showed up and retrieved the gun. It would make things look pretty bad, and that wasn't how I wanted them to be.

I tried to console myself with the thought that if she didn't appear in the Glade within a certain time, I'd search for the gun myself. If it wasn't there, I'd breathe easier, and still have the satisfaction of knowing that I'd played every angle.

Of course I could have gone to the spot and conducted my search. But even if I'd found the gun, it wouldn't have meant anything. There'd be no proof that the supposed intruder hadn't put it there himself. But if Dale, or Kirk, or Mr. Warren showed up and got the gun, there'd be no further proof needed.

This much I already had learned: I was still in love with Dale. That put me back where I had started, except that then I'd been a kid, and now I'd grown up. Maybe she had changed—I didn't know; but all night long she'd been giving me the impression that she was the same old Dale, and that there wasn't any reason for me to have grooved my life away from hers.

Mr. Warren had been following the same line. So had Kirk. I asked myself why. Was it because they liked me, or because they wanted to sell me the idea that if I did what I was about to do, I'd be betraying their friendship?

I reached the vicinity of the Glade and hid myself. It was quiet out there. Far off I could see the lights of the big house and hear the faint, distant hum of traffic.

The night was brilliant: lots of stars, and enough moonlight. Somewhere near by a mockingbird was having himself a big time. I crouched behind some scrub undergrowth and waited.

I didn't have to wait long. Someone came through the trees and started walking slowly along the dry bed of the brook which led to the

cave where Dale and I had once concealed notes for each other. The moonlight made it easy enough to see, and I felt an awful sinking sensation in the pit of my stomach.

The newcomer was Dale Warren.

She apparently had no suspicion that this might be a trap. She picked her way over the rough underfooting and went straight to the cave. She stretched out her right hand, and when she withdrew it I saw the gleam of nickel. I didn't have to guess. I knew it had to be the gun with which Sylvia Warren had been killed.

So this was it! I had succeeded, and I had failed. The family cordiality—Dale's warmth toward me—all an act. There was the gun; there was a person who knew all about it, and who had concealed evidence. There was the girl I'd fallen in love with all over again.

Dale started toward a hill which in turn led to a deep ravine, heavy with scrub growth. That was the final touch: No chance now that she could logically contend that she had retrieved the gun for the purpose of turning it over to the police. She was headed definitely *away* from the house.

I moved as silently as I could to intercept her. She must have heard me, because she stopped suddenly, and her figure stiffened. I dropped all attempt at concealment and stepped from behind some bushes. I held out my hand and said: "Let's have it, Dale."

She looked up at me, eyes wide. She was badly frightened. But she didn't argue. She put the gun in my hands and said simply: "You remembered, didn't you, Jerry?"

"Of course."

"I was afraid you would. That's why I came to move it."

My throat was dry. This was unreal, unnatural. I hated every part of it. I told her the usual thing about anything she said being used against her, and she said she understood that.

"You put the gun there yourself, didn't you, Dale?"

"Yes. I didn't expect to see you, and nobody else would have been likely to find it. Not for a long time, anyway."

"Why did you hide it?"

"Because I wanted the police to believe the intruder story."

"To protect who?"

"All of us. Especially me."

"Why especially you?"

"Because," she said quietly, "I killed Sylvia."

I could see now that she wasn't as calm as I had thought. I took her hand. It was cold. I guided her to a big, smooth rock and made her sit down. She said: "Sit with me, will you, Jerry?"

"Why?"

"You look too big standing there, too formidable."

I sat beside her, but didn't touch her. I said: "I'm a policeman, Dale. Beyond that point, I'm your friend. I'm asking you to do something. Tell me what happened tonight, but please tell it truthfully—or don't tell anything."

She thought that over, and eventually she nodded. Then she said: "I'm afraid you won't believe it."

"Why not?"

"Because it's the usual story. It extenuates all of us beautifully—up to a point."

"If it's the truth," I answered, "I think I'll know it."

She spoke slowly, carefully. "Dad and Sylvia haven't been happy. She could be sweet and kind, but that wasn't her character, really. Underneath, she was hard as nails.

"She was selfish and extravagant. The latter point can be proved. But mostly she was demanding and quarrelsome. She had a violent temper." Dale shook her head and smiled wanly. "You wouldn't have known this house, Jerry; it wasn't at all as you knew it in the past. Kirk and I used to discuss it with each other. Dad was miserable.

"Tonight at dinner there was a quarrel. It started from nothing. At the peak of Sylvia's rage, she went farther than she'd ever gone before. And for the first time, Dad took a firm position in front of Kirk and myself.

"You know Dad. He's quiet and dignified, but he's human. He told her that he didn't intend to stand any more. He said that, much as he hated the publicity, he intended to insist on a divorce. He offered to let her go to Nevada for it, but he said—and she knew he meant it—that if she refused, he'd bring suit here in California.

"I don't believe Sylvia ever had thought he'd go that far. She was overloaded with ego: she believed that she controlled him, absolutely. Anyway, she sneered at what she called his 'threat,' and when he repeated it, calmly, she suddenly realized that he was serious.

"Then she really exploded. She said she would kill him. She said she had a gun, and that she was going to get it. She went through the living-room and smashed a vase against the floor. On her way down the hall we heard her smash another vase. From upstairs we heard two more crashes. We sat there looking at each other, and then I got frightened. I knew Sylvia's temper: it was almost psychotic.

"I told Dad and Kirk I thought I could talk her out of making a greater fool of herself. I ran upstairs, and went to Sylvia's room. She turned from her dresser as I came in, and she had this gun in her hand. I won't try to dress it up, Jerry. I'll only say that I believed then—and I believe now—that she intended to kill Dad.

"I tried arguing with her. It got me nowhere. She started for the door—toward me—still holding the gun. As she tried to brush past me, I did what I had to do. I grabbed her right hand . . . the one in which she was holding the pistol.

"There was a struggle. That's what I meant when I said my story would sound weak. It's always someone reaching for a gun, a struggle, and then an accidental shot. It sounds just as unreal, just as corny, as the poetry we used to write to each other. But it's what happened. Before Dad and Kirk got to the room, she was dead."

I could see that Dale was holding herself in check with a tremendous effort. For the second time that night I lighted two cigarettes and passed one to her. After a long pause, she picked up her story:

"I insisted on calling the police. Dad and Kirk argued against it. They knew my story was true. They said it amounted to nothing more than a terrible accident. They argued that if we told the truth, there was danger I'd be tried for murder—and that in such a trial there was always the chance I'd be convicted. That seemed to them to be an unnecessary risk to take, in view of what we knew were the facts. The thought of scandal probably entered their minds too; but it was secondary.

"We cooked up the story about the intruder. Kirk deliberately left as many footprints below the window as possible, so that you couldn't tell whether there had been a prowler. I said I knew a place where the gun could be safely hidden. I brought it here. Then I went back to the house, and we telephoned the police. You came."

I said: "I believe your story, Dale. That's because I know you. I know your father and Kirk. How others will look at it, I don't know. Your stepmother was killed while you were struggling with her—"

"—to keep her from killing Dad."

"I'll accept that. But then you concocted a wild story. You hid the gun. That doesn't add up so good."

"Are you going to arrest me?"

"That's up to Lieutenant Walsh."

"You think he will?"

"I think he must."

"What will the charge be?"

"Probably suspicion of murder."

The words sounded ugly, especially here in the Glade, where things had always been so gentle and beautiful between us.

I hated myself. What I had achieved had not been the result of unusual police ability: It had been based on private, personal knowledge. Sure, all the dicks had suspected that the story they were telling was sour, but they couldn't have proved it. I had produced the proof they needed, and without which there could be no adequate prosecution.

She said, without looking at me: "If I've told the truth, I'm not guilty of any crime, am I?"

"Probably not. Except, of course, the conspiracy to conceal evidence; but they wouldn't pay too much attention to that."

"You think that I'm innocent, but you're still going to tell your Lieutenant?"

Miserably, I said: "Yes."

"I knew you would."

"And you hate me for it?"

"No," she said quietly. "What you do or don't do can't affect the fact that I've always loved you."

That came unexpectedly, and it hit hard. I was enough a policeman to weigh her statement, to wonder whether she might be saying this to soften me up.

"You mustn't think that way, Jerry," she said gently. "I've told you the truth. I don't want it to change, whatever it is you must do."

Then suddenly, without either of us knowing quite how it happened, she was in my arms, and she was crying. I tilted her head back and kissed her. . . . And for a few precious moments we forgot why we were there. We turned back the clock and were two kids again.

We broke away eventually, returned to the house and went in the front door. Marty Walsh was relaxed in an easy chair in the living-room; Kirk was sitting on the couch; Mr. Warren was standing in front of the fireplace.

Still holding Dale's hand, I took the gun out of my pocket and handed it to Marty. He showed no surprise, but Mr. Warren and Kirk started to ask questions. Marty quieted them. He said: "What goes with this?"

"Miss Warren," I said. "She accidentally killed her stepmother. Her father and brother both knew it."

Marty asked for details. For the second time in an hour, Dale told her story. She seemed to have herself under better control now, but the story was the same: just as clear, just as straight, just as convincing. When she had finished, Marty threw some questions at her, and she answered them all without hesitation.

"You're willing to sign a statement?" asked Marty.

"Yes."

Kirk said: "What will they do to her, Lieutenant?"

"She'll be booked on suspicion of murder. Under the circumstances, and with our recommendation, I'm reasonably sure she will be released on bail. Of course, the newspapers will get it, but that can't be helped."

"And then?" asked Mr. Warren.

"Off the record, I'd say that her story will be believed. In that case there's a chance the case won't go beyond the inquest."

"What does that mean?"

"If the Coroner's jury believes Miss Warren's story, they'll return a verdict of justifiable homicide. On the strength of that, the District Attorney's office would probably refuse to issue a complaint." He got up, stretched his slender figure and said: "Let's go."

"Where?"

"City Hall. Homicide. Miss Warren can ride with Jerry and me. You two can follow in your own car if you want. We'll keep a couple of officers on duty here in case the Skipper wants the place shaken down more thoroughly."

Dale asked if she could take a few things with her, and Marty said yes, she could. He didn't go upstairs with her, or send me, which indicated that he believed she had been telling the truth.

That left four men in the room. We stood around awkwardly, wondering what to say next. It was Kirk Warren who spoke. He said: "You used to be in love with Dale, didn't you, Jerry?"

"Yes," I said. "I still am."

"And yet—"

"That's the way it was, Kirk. I took advantage of your past hospitality, of my friendship with Dale, to get at the bottom of this. You probably think it was a pretty snide trick, don't you?"

"I'm not sure," he answered surprisingly. "I don't know what I'd have done if I'd been in your place. How does Dale feel about it?"

"Why not ask her?"

Mr. Warren said: "She's in love with Jerry. Always has been." He looked at me and smiled faintly. "When all the smoke has cleared away, Jerry, will you come out to see us?"

I felt myself flush. I said something about being glad to if I was still welcome. Marty was staring at the wall, taking it all in, saying nothing.

Dale came downstairs with a tiny overnight bag. She said: "I'm ready, Lieutenant."

I carried Dale's bag for her, and we went outside to where the police car was parked. Marty took the keys from me and climbed under the wheel, indicating that Dale and I should get into the back.

We started off. Marty didn't drive fast, and his manner proclaimed that he was merely the chauffeur. I took Dale's hand, and we edged close to each other, so that our bodies touched.

Dawn wasn't too far away. Traffic was light. It was that quiet, tranquil hour when most of the nocturnal activities have ended, and it is yet too early for the turmoil of another day to have started.

I felt Dale's eyes on me, and after a while she said: "Don't feel badly about it, Jerry."

"I can't very well help it."

"It's better this way. Even if you hadn't been assigned, even if they'd never been able to disprove our story, we'd have lived in constant apprehension. This way the whole thing will be decided one way or the other."

"I don't believe you're in much danger."

"Technically, perhaps not. I don't know how long it'll take me to get over the shock. What happened tonight—"

I gripped her hand tightly. "Why talk about it now?"

She nodded and said I was right; there was no sense rehashing. We both knew that there was always danger when a person was facing a charge such as this. Neither of us could guess how the newspapers or the public would react, or how her friends would take it.

She put her lips close to my ear, thinking Marty could not hear. She said: "What I told you back there in the Glade, I meant."

I wanted to put my arms around her, but the gesture didn't seem to fit the situation. I figured she must know how I felt about her, and how miserable I was.

We hit Temple Street. Still not much traffic: just a few stray taxis, and a half dozen trucks rolling along. I picked a moment when nobody could see us to put my arms around Dale. She responded instantly and eagerly, and I had a feeling of assurance that our tomorrows were all going to be pretty wonderful.

We had forgotten the man in the front seat, forgotten that there was a rear-view mirror. After a while we separated, and the dry voice of Lieutenant Marty Walsh floated back to us.

"I ought to report you, Jerry," he said.

"For what?"

"In the police manual," he stated, "there's a rule that no policeman is permitted to kiss a prisoner."

There Are Always

FOR a Marine fighter pilot to be crawling through the cold, snowy foxholes of Northeastern Korea with a battalion of the Seventh Army Division wasn't exactly my idea of fighting a war.

But a job was a job, and that last week of November, 1950, the predictions that we'd have the Chosin (also called Changjin) reservoir and the south shore of the Yalu river by Christmas sounded good.

Waiting with my Marines in a dark log-covered bunker that night for our special act in the forthcoming dawn attack, I must have dozed off. How dopey can a guy get on a prominent high hill on the front lines?

Anyway, dreams of my wife and son back home in sun-drenched Miami were shattered suddenly by the stutter of burp guns, scuffling, and enemy jabber outside our dugout.

My eyes popped open in time to see the flaps of our shelter yanked aside and several fur-framed Chinese faces peer in. They were brightly outlined in the frosty, white moonlight. In a quick sweat and chill I let go at them with my .45 as my men opened up with their rifles. Back at us came a hot grenade. It hit between my feet and filled the tiny room with a deafening roar, flying shrapnel, and feathers from my sleeping bag.

My legs! In despair I felt for them. They were still there. Miraculously, I wasn't even hit!

"Let's get out of here," I yelled. But my men were already bailing out of that bunker into a log-covered escape-trench in the rear. I pushed in after Corporal Gerald Thomas of Youngstown, Ohio, the team chief of my Marine Tactical Air-control Party. Pfc. Wendell Shaffer of Philadelphia was scrambling all over my heels, cursing a shrapnel wound in his left arm. There were no other injuries.

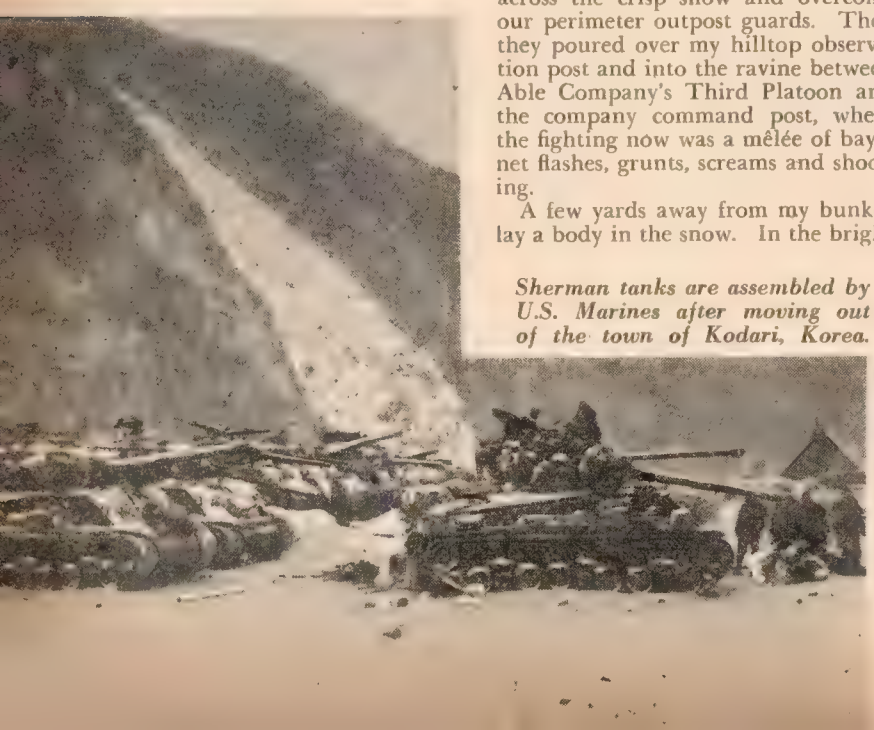
Outside, the Reds crawled all over the bunker and our slit trench, firing down at us between the logs. I wriggled toward the open end of the trench to shoot it out with them.

A quick hail of machine-gun bullets splattered the logs overhead. Splinters and a ricochet buzzed into the trench. The Reds became still, and blood dripped through the cracks of the logs. Cautiously I raised my face to see what was going on.

While our battalion had been poised for its dawn attack, about three hundred Reds pulled a midnight assault of their own. We didn't know it then, but it was part of the mass winter offensive with which the Chinese Communist Forces had precipitated themselves into the Korean War. In a lightning attack they had swept across the crisp snow and overcome our perimeter outpost guards. Then they poured over my hilltop observation post and into the ravine between Able Company's Third Platoon and the company command post, where the fighting now was a mêlée of bayonet flashes, grunts, screams and shooting.

A few yards away from my bunker lay a body in the snow. In the bright moonlight I was startled to see it was Able Company's commander, dead!

I wondered who was in command now.



Sherman tanks are assembled by U.S. Marines after moving out of the town of Kodari, Korea.

My job in this Army battalion was strictly that of directing fighter planes by radio down onto those enemy strongpoints which could not be liquidated by the battalion's own weapons. I was one of several pilots trained by the Marine Corps for this type of work who were now on temporary duty with Marine, Army and South Korean infantry outfits. In fact, I had participated with the U. S. Army in maneuvers in the Caribbean, Hawaii and Japan for two years, had landed in Korea with the First Cavalry Division shortly after the war had started, and was now attached to the Seventh Infantry Division. I even had a special code name—Boyhood One Four—and four trained Marines as assistants.

But basically I was still a pilot, sneaking in a flight whenever I could get near an airplane, and waiting for the time when my tour of "ground pounding" duty would be completed, so I could get back into a Marine squadron.

As I peered out of my trench at the moonlit battle centered around the company command post, the lieutenant in charge of the Second Platoon stealthily crawled over the snow from the far left flank, which had not been engaged by the enemy. He was seeking instructions. Seeing the dead company commander, he hesitated, and then turned to me. "Well, Captain, I guess you've got the company. You're the senior officer."

What to do? The company was cut off from the rest of the battalion stretched thinly over the hills for the scheduled morning push. It was the First Battalion of the 31st Infantry Regiment, the lead element of a special Seventh Division task force to help the Marines complete the encirclement of the Chosin reservoir, a principal source of electric power for Northern Korea and much of Manchuria. This huge lake, high on a mountainous plateau approximately sixty miles inland from the coastal city of Hungnam, was about a mile and a half to our left.

The remainder of our task force, the First Battalion of the 31st Infantry

Miracles

As told to
CAPT. HUBARD KUOKKA, U.S.M.C.
by CAPT. EDWARD P. STAMFORD

The story of a veteran Marine Corps dive bomber pilot who directed close air-support operations as forward air controller during the bitter fighting around Hagaru-ri. . . . Illustrated with Official Marine Corps photographs.

Regiment and the 57th Field Artillery Battalion were camped on an inlet of the reservoir, four miles behind us on the road to Hagaru-ri. Elements of the First Marine Division were on the other side of the lake to the west.

My little aircraft control unit had been set up on Able Company's hilltop position merely because it had the best observation over the enemy terrain in front of the entire battalion. Now the company's Third Platoon was bearing the brunt of the fight for the command post in the ravine behind my bunker. The other two platoons on the left, holding the battalion's flank, were not engaged, but were in danger of being enveloped from behind. Or if the Reds were successful, they could push along the road running through the ravine to attack the battalion headquarters, mortars and trucks a few hundred yards to our rear. I had no communication with battalion headquarters or with Baker and Charley companies to the right, across the ravine in which the battle flamed. The telephone lines were cut, and my walkie-talkie radio had been blown to bits by the grenade blast in the bunker.

Decisions! Decisions! For an aviator to take over an infantry company was like putting Joe DiMaggio in as quarterback for the Cleveland Browns football team. But I *had* to act! There being no pressure on the lieutenant's platoon, I had him swing his men into the battle in the ravine. They were all that was needed to wipe out the Red penetration.

The enemy hills were now quiet, but the men were still shooting. At whom? Crazy kids! We needed to save ammo.

I stood up, silhouetted on the hilltop, and bellowed in my foghorn voice: "Cease fire! Who in hell are you shooting at? Can't you see—"

BRRRRRRRP! A stream of bullets snapped past my ears and legs! I made a quick sitzmark in the snow. Strangely, I wasn't hit, but I sure felt silly. My whole company opened up on that Red who had tried to clobber me with a burp gun.

We wearily beat off several more attacks in the moonlight and hugged our foxholes through an intense artillery and mortar barrage. Then, as the sun came up, Major Richard Miller, the battalion executive officer,

United States Marines file down a typical mountain road as they move out of the Korean town of Koto-ri.

finally got through to us to relieve me of the company.

About this time four Corsairs of the First Marine Air Wing, based on the beach near Hungnam, roared up like brawlers looking for trouble. Those pilots were my boys! Confused by all the dead Chinamen dotting the snow, they needed directions as to what was friendly and what was enemy. I knew they were trying to get me on the radio.

My driver, Pfc. Billy Johnson of Fort Worth, Texas, fetched my portable air-ground radio from my jeep down on the road. I clicked on the switch and heard an eager voice crackle urgently: *"Boyhood One Four, Boyhood One Four, this is Fireball One One. Acknowledge! Over."*

I answered and then said: *"Man, we've got Gooks up the giggy this morning. See where our yellow panels cross the road? About three hundred yards north is a ridge. See it? It's lousy with Commies, and on the reverse slope are mortars. If you lay your napalm along that ridge from the road to the big rock, you ought to wipe out a battalion for a starter."*

"Ha, so, Hammerhead," the flight leader returned in the popular Japanese expression. *"We'll make a dummy run first."* I guess I got that nickname from my blond crew-cut hair and stocky build. I don't mind.

The Corsairs peeled off, first for a look. Then they swooped down to treetop level in a series of scorching dives to splash their liquid flame on the ridge. Some of the Reds tried to run but were cut down by our rifles and machine guns.

"That's good, Fireball One One," I called. *"Now pour your rockets on the mortars behind the ridge!"*

Again the planes pounced down, spitting their five-inch high-explosive rockets. Each fighter had the punch of a destroyer broadside. That stopped the Reds for a while, but by afternoon they pulled a banzai charge on Charley company's right flank and rammed at us along the road with self-propelled guns. Again I had to call for planes to throw them back.

They kept driving at us for two days and nights, and we kept killing them by the hundreds. We were holding our own, but we were getting exhausted, low on food, and almost out of ammunition. Furthermore, our heavy casualties were aggravated by frostbite in the piercing icy wind.

We learned that our other two battalions behind us were trapped at the icebound inlet, and that on the other side of the reservoir two regiments of the First Marine Division were cut off at Yudam-ni. We were all ordered to fall back to consolidate at the First Marine Division command post at Hagaru-ri, on the southern tip of the reservoir, twelve miles back.

We got back to the inlet, but in trying to slip across the five hundred yards of ice to get to the troops pinned down on the far shore, our task force commander, Colonel Allen McLean, was captured! I called for my flying artillery again. Under its protection, the troops got across the ice; but the trucks, loaded with wounded, had to run a gantlet of enemy fire over a long causeway. My radio jeep was last. I felt like a rat running across a rafter with everyone throwing shoes at me!

Now we were *really* hemmed in. The Reds who had given us a hard time on the hill joined those besieging the inlet. Their bugles were blowing all over the place. During the day our Navy, Marine and Australian fighters dived down into the blazing enemy guns to break up the vicious attacks, but at night we were on our own as the Reds closed in desperately to make the kill before dawn.

Although the Air Force C-119's and C-47's tried to keep us supplied by means of parachute drops, we were running out of ammunition, food, medical supplies—and strength! Furthermore, it was thirty degrees below zero. The situation had the makings of a deep-freeze massacre. All the big problems and ambitions of my thirty-three-year life now seemed ridiculous, from my water-polo days in Miami to flying dive bombers in World War II. Even the pilots seemed to feel we were doomed, and tried harder. Many were hit by ground fire, and I think two were shot down.

We learned that a relief force was on its way, but it didn't appear. Enemy bullets rained down on us from the encircling hills. Many of the wounded froze. Wendell Shaffer, already hit in the arm, was wounded in the back while in the medical tent. The Air Force controller attached to the other battalion was killed, and all air control fell in my lap.

Our only link with the outside world was by radio. When our jeep receiver failed, Billy Johnson and my radio expert, Corporal Myron Smith of Omaha, worked all day among the flying bullets and with clumsy, cold-stiff fingers successfully rewound a coil. The radio worked. At dusk of our second day, with a snowstorm brewing, I lost contact with the transports, and in the darkness a plane-load of carbine and rifle ammo—our last hope of living through the night—fell to the enemy. Marine night fighters saved us, slipping in between snow flurries to knock out several artillery pieces by diving at the flashes.

We weren't gaining anything just sitting there. Our battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Don C. Faith, a trim ex-paratrooper from Alexandria, Louisiana, who had taken over the task force upon the capture of Colonel McLean, ordered an all-out, do-or-die breakthrough for the following morning. We radioed for all available fighters and an air-drop of ammo. This was it!

Three of us spent the night in a foxhole with the Catholic chaplain, Father Lawrence Brunnert, who prayed continuously. At dawn it was still snowing. I lost all hope for air

Leathernecks halted in sub-zero temperatures of Northern Korea by Red Chinese roadblock.

support. The bugles were blowing again. We made ready for our last fight. The heavy snow-clouds settled on us like a fateful shroud.

Father Brunnert rose to go help the wounded. Before leaving he gave each of us a Miraculous Medal, blessed by Father Pio of the Vatican. "Have courage," he said. "Remember, there are always Miracles." Then he blessed us, slung his rifle over his shoulder, and disappeared into the snowstorm. I never saw him again.

Then suddenly the sun broke through the clouds, and Corsairs stacked up over us like blackbirds over a cornfield. They were happy to learn that we were still alive.

"Work those Commies over good," Colonel Faith told me. "Knock them on their duff, and we'll run right through them, ammo or no ammo!"

My radioman, Corporal Smith, and I wormed up to the point of our weary task force, right under the nose of the enemy blocking our escape route. I told the pilots to strafe ten yards in front of our panels, and to hit the rest of the enemy concentrations with everything they had.

When the planes roared down, I didn't dare look up. I didn't want to scare myself. Those big blazing bent-wing U-birds seemed to be screaming down on me! I hugged the snow, fingers crossed, and prayed as the explosive bullets ripped into the mass of cringing enemy troops in front of us. It was ghastly!

The artillery and mortar crews shot the last of their ammunition in one big climactic barrage and then destroyed their weapons, grabbed their bayonets, and took positions as the rear guard for the thirty trucks, most of them loaded with the more seriously wounded and frostbitten.

When Colonel Faith ordered the assault, I told the planes to make dummy runs. This time they roared down with silent guns, but those dazed Reds who were still alive ducked for cover until it was too late. Our men charged over them with bayonets, and we were on our way, the planes sweeping aside the enemy as we went. Still out of ammunition, I begged for another air-drop.

WE expected the relief force around any bend; but in the late afternoon we ran smack-dab into a worse trap than before.

The narrow road, winding around the nose of a high ridge towering above us on the right, clung to the wall of a deep horseshoe gorge. At the bend were two enemy roadblocks from which heavy automatic fire quickly disabled our four leading trucks, stalling the entire convoy. From across the cañon and above us on our right streams of cross-fire hosed

A Corsair zooms skyward after dropping napalm on a Red concentration.

up and down our long line of trucks and men as an assault force climbed up out of the cañon floor to finish us off. I pushed the panic button, calling for all fighters in the area.

The Reds were twenty-five yards from us when the big F4U-5's of the Marine Devil Cats squadron roared into the treacherous winding gorge. While Captain Tom Mulvihill of Philadelphia scooped in with four planes, their guns blazing, to send the attackers tumbling back into the chasm and to silence the guns on our flanks, Major Ed Montagne of Pomona, California, lowered his flaps and made a couple of slow passes over us. From his bomb pylons dropped three huge para-bags of much-needed carbine and rifle ammunition. It was a bull's-eye right into the troops' waiting arms.

As the grateful men distributed the ammo, Colonel Faith stared at the fighters and said: "Marine close air support is perfect!"

Time was wasting. We had to knock out the roadblocks and get the convoy through before dark. Colonel Faith tried a frontal assault, but his men were beaten back with heavy casualties. Then he ordered an envelopment up the steep slope to our right. The Reds were dug in tenaciously. Fighting up against them was hard, sweaty and bloody work.

To keep them covered I had three flights of Corsairs going at once. One was putting the scorch on the enemy across the cañon with napalm; another was blasting a mortar position with rockets and bombs: while another raked the positions in front of advancing G.I.'s.

The white slope erupted rocks, flame, smoke and death as the explosive rockets, fragmentation bombs and explosive machine-gun bullets ripped into it. It was getting dark; enemy bullets still snapped out of the inferno, and the unshaved and dirty men were tired, hungry, discouraged and many of them blood-caked from one or two wounds. But with an eternity of rest threatening them, they pushed doggedly upward.

Suddenly Smith, beside me on the road, gasped. He was hit in the shin. I put him in the radio jeep already loaded with casualties, including Major Miller, the battalion exec, who was lying over the hood, and Pfc. Shaffer, who had been hit for the third time, this time in the leg.

By now it was too dark for planes to be flying around in that narrow cañon. I left my radio and wearily climbed the right to help the troops push over the top to the road on the other side. Here we found the relief convoy—a jumble of burned-out trucks, ambulances, tanks and dead—victims of the roadblock.

There was still an enemy pocket on the point of our ridge. In the attack to wipe it out, Colonel Faith was badly wounded.

With the enemy now cleaned out, my concern was to get the wounded to Hagaru-ri before they froze to death. I grabbed several soldiers and set them to removing the mess of logs and junk blocking the road. We worked hard,

Although heavily riddled by enemy fire, ambulance is still used for casualties.

sweating in the sub-zero weather. Suddenly I realized that we were all alone. The combat troops had shoved off—to clear the road ahead, no doubt, I thought.

The dark night was hushed. Even the battered enemy across the cañon was quiet.

It appeared that it was up to me to get the convoy rolling again. Leaving the men to finish clearing out the débris, I crunched over the crisp snow to the silent line of trucks and torn men.

Pushing the damaged vehicles far enough aside to permit the rest of the convoy to pass was undoubtedly the hardest job I've ever had to do in my life. The men were too badly wounded, stiff with cold, and weak from hunger and loss of blood to budge even a wheelbarrow, let alone a truck. I had to kid and beg them to make the effort, and to encourage those who faltered from pain. We just couldn't work up enough power.

To stir them up, I cursed and raged. Some of them seemed in a daze. I myself pushed and strained until my muscles bulged, but the five-ton steel trucks would not move. I was almost frantic with frustration. With a clear road and no enemy around, we were apparently doomed by our own weakness. Then I thought of the Miraculous Medal and prayed. I guess that did it. The men tried again. This time gritting their teeth and sweating and bleeding from strained wounds, they struggled desperately, and finally two of the vehicles rolled over the cliff, and the other two were pushed aside. Many of the men collapsed and had to be helped into the trucks.

We picked up the wounded from the battle of the roadblock, and finally were on our way to Hagaru-ri—and nobody shooting at us. I kept in the lead with four of my roadblock helpers, scouting out the road ahead. I couldn't see a single effective soldier anywhere.

It was pitch dark, clouds blotting out the moon, but the white snow was luminous. The heavy silence was broken only by the whining and roaring trucks, a couple hundred yards behind. Footprints in the snow indicated that the troops had gone on ahead. I hoped to catch them. The reservoir was a quarter mile away to my right.

Suddenly several figures loomed in the dark before me.

"Hello, men, where's your—" I started to ask, but was stopped by a rifle in my face! We had been captured by enemy troops!

A little Chinese soldier made me his personal prize. He was only a kid. He was wearing what looked like tennis shoes in the snow, and looked as cold and miserable as I felt.

I was discouraged. It seemed we just couldn't win. I wondered how to warn the convoy still roaring and whining on the road. My little guard became excited and made strange movements, pointing to the ground. So did a Red behind us with a burp gun. They wanted us to lie down. I guess I was too slow in complying. My guard fired his rifle in my face!

Maybe he was just trying to scare me, but by that time I was so hungry, tired, cold and just plain beat that I was beyond scaring. I believe one between the horns would have felt good.

However, the shot was a blessing. It stopped the convoy and was the last round in the little Gook's magazine. His weapon seemed to fall apart when the clip popped out. He couldn't seem to reload it.

That I enjoyed. Lying there, I secretly tore the confidential codes and call signs out of my notebook, chewed them up, and buried the pulp in the snow. The men next to me were whispering about escape.

Suddenly someone in the convoy opened up with a BAR. Bullets zipped only a foot above us as we burrowed deeper into the cold, wet snow. Some of the Reds were hit, and lay moaning and squirming. A Chink with a captured BAR who had blocked our escape to the reservoir moved off to shoot back. My little captor was still fiddling with his rifle, more excited than ever. The man behind us blazed at the trucks with his burp gun.

This was it! While he was blinded by the flashes!

"Let's go," I hissed to my companions and bounded off, stumbled for an agonizing second when my cold, cramped legs almost failed, and then sprinted toward the lake. I don't know if the others followed me or if the Reds shot at us. I was running like hell, stacking my chips on the confusion!

Feeling that I would be too easily seen and tracked on the flat ice of the lake, I cut to the left up a brush-lined creek-bed to the hills. I must have run a half-mile before I stopped to listen and to get my bearings.

A truck whined in the distance. Was the convoy making it through? I sneaked back to the road. No convoy yet. Then scrambling over rocks and icy gullies, I skirted the road to a nearby village to wait, hoping for friendly troops there. But the cluster of snow-laden thatched huts was as quiet as a forgotten mausoleum, evidently deserted. More rifle-fire was crackling down the road, and the trucks were quiet. Then the ominous crash of hand grenades ripped through the silence. Disarmed by my captors and helpless, I determined to make it to Hagaru-ri for assistance.

Darting across an alley, I was suddenly hit by a bright light. It was from the full moon. The clouds I had cussed for two days were now scudding away, leaving a bright, sparkling-cold sky. Now I cussed the moon!

Maybe the village harbored enemy troops! Imagining slant eyes peering down a rifle barrel at me out of every shadow, I took off like a scared ghost and headed south, avoiding all roads and signs of habitation.

With no one else to worry about for a change, I began to feel confident—that is, until suddenly along the slope of a steep ridge I was confronted by a Communist soldier, about fifty feet from me—and armed!

The little guy was probably alone and scared stiff, but all I could think was: "God, another ambush?" I visualized hundreds of Reds waiting to pounce on me. Automatically I bounded behind a bush and scrambled up the hill to my right. The Gook took off after me. I kept bushes, rocks and knolls between me and him to prevent him from taking a shot at me in the moonlight. Driving up that steep slope, my heart thumped like a Diesel engine, my lungs burned like fire, and my boots seemed to become chunks of lead.

Dimly I realized that the ideal spot for enemy troop positions would be on top of the hill I was climbing. All I could do was hope they weren't there. They weren't. The summit was cold, windswept and barren. The other side was very steep but invitingly shaded from the moon. I staggered down with long, shaky, seven-league strides—faster and faster. I couldn't stop! Then I stumbled, my foot twisting under me in a wrenching flash of pain, and in despair I went out of control like a big frantic snowball. I remember thinking: "If that ankle is broken, Stamford, you've had it."

I wound up in a heap and lay there holding my ankle—blurry-eyed, gasping like a fish out of water, and crying like a baby. The cards were sure stacked against me. I wondered how to fight my pursuer.

Then I realized how quiet it was. Evidently the Gook had given up. My fingers were getting stiff with cold, and I knew I had to move or freeze. I took a step. Excruciating pain flashed through my ankle. I tried again. As the blood warmed up my foot, I felt better. At least the ankle wasn't broken, but the ligaments were badly torn.

FINALLY, after hours of painful hobbling, I reached the summit of a hill from which I could see Hagaru-ri, headquarters for the good old Marines. Tracer bullets seemed to float out of town toward me. I thought: "They have the Marines surrounded too, and I must be in the middle of them."

I wasn't *about* to be caught again, not this near home. I sneaked down cautiously. I crept a few feet, listened and looked, and crept a little farther. Every time I saw or heard anything I wasn't sure of I melted into the snow for several minutes. It seemed as if I crawled for hours, praying with each wiggle.

Suddenly a tough menacing voice hailed me in the moonlight—but to me it was the sweetest voice I'd ever heard: "Halt—who's there?" I was happy as a kid at Christmas!

OVER a cup of hot coffee in the command-post tent I found that I had almost slipped through the Marine lines undetected. I told about the convoy and was surprised to learn that many of its men were already coming in, over the ice. Also, the Marines were sending out a relief patrol. About that time I fell asleep.

Next day I learned that the assault battalions which I was chasing when captured had been standing by on the ice, a few hundred yards from where the convoy was finally stopped. They helped many of the walking wounded to safety across the frozen, bullet-swept, body-strewn lake. Among those who got back were Pfc. Shaffer with his three wounds, and Corporal Thomas, who didn't have a scratch. Two days later Major Miller appeared. Bloody, tattered and dirty, he had hobbled all the way on the road. The Reds took his wrist watch and valuables but let him pass. A native woman had even bandaged his hand, from which his fingers had been shot away.

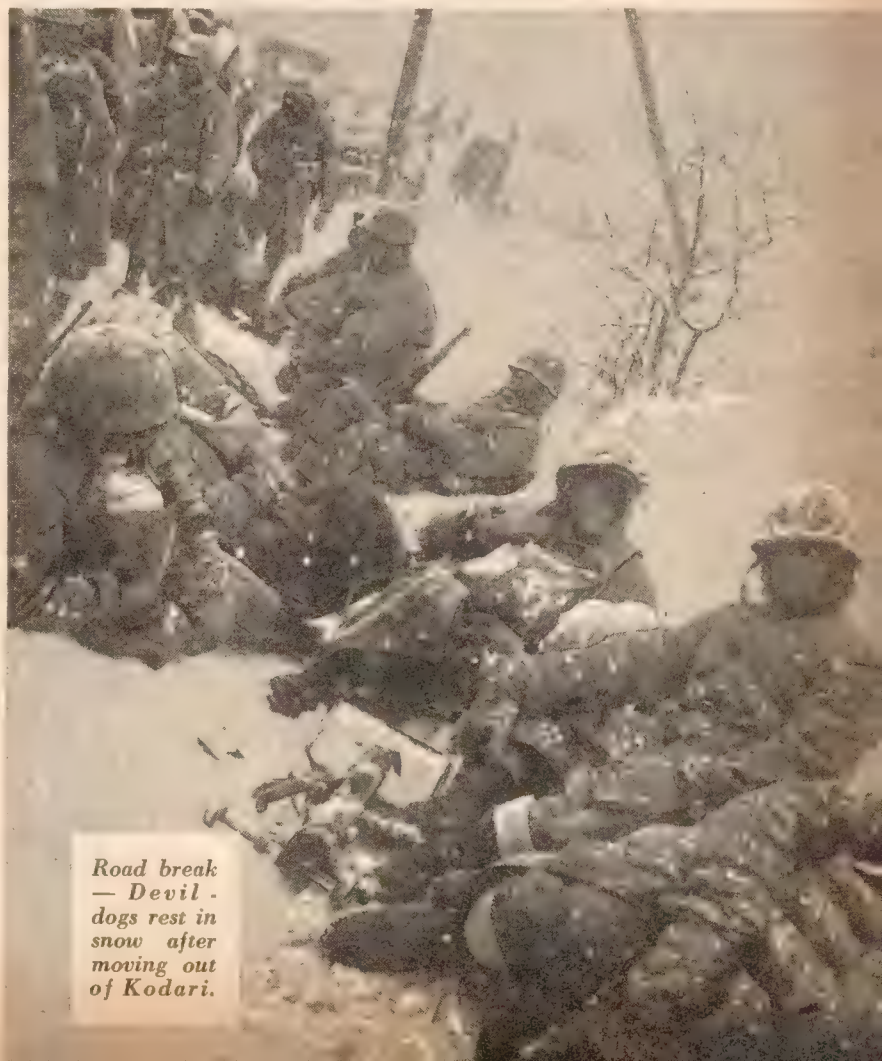
The wounded who weren't able to leave the trucks didn't fare so well. The Marine patrol reported that the Reds, evidently thinking the trucks were defended, had charged in with grenades, killing virtually everyone. I was shocked to learn that Billy Johnson and Myron Smith were among the missing, as was Lieutenant Colonel Faith and the padre, Chaplain Brunnert. I know he stayed with the wounded until the end.

Hagaru-ri was encircled by the Reds, but the Leathernecks and soldiers fought out of there in one of the most heroic military moves in history. However I wasn't there. On the day after my escape, with my foot as big as a balloon, I was flown off the tiny Hagaru-ri airstrip to a hospital in Japan.

I was looking forward to two things—getting back to Miami to thaw out, and then to duty where an aviator belongs—in an airplane in the blue.

I'll always carry the Miraculous Medal; it reminds me of a brave man and a sermon I'll never forget: "Remember, there are always Miracles."

I believe it.



Road break — Devil-dogs rest in snow after moving out of Kodari.

The Devil's Game

FRANCOIS VILLON chuckled, and the laughter of the devil ran like quicksilver through his mind. He sat where the soft heat of the leaping flames blended into the coolness of the night; and his face was even more hawklike than usual, nose thrusting boldly, satanically dark eyes half-closed, as he sang mockingly of the exploits of Comte du Val of His Majesty's court.

Bagot cleaned the last wisp of meat from a chicken leg and groped for the wine-skin. Amusement lay deep in his eyes, and fondness for the poet-rogue across the fire—but worry was there too, for he sensed that Villon had overreached himself this time.

"You'll sing a different *ballade*, François," he said past a gulp of bubbly purple wine, "if the Comte's bullies take you in their hands. The Comte has a long memory and a shorter temper; he intends to hang you at the walls of Montfauçon." He shrugged. "I do not know which lifted his back the higher—the stealing of the wench he calls his ward, or the plucking of the chessmen given him by Fouquet."

The last singing note of the lute drifted into silence, and Villon laid the instrument aside, mockery still in his lips, but with the laughter dying. Wood popped in the fire, and a stream of sparks geysered and died. A shiver touched his spine suddenly, and he shrugged, wondering for the hundredth time if the Comte du Val did more than guess at the identity of the moskeneer who had robbed his home.

He lay back upon his cloak and watched the stars, as he had done this past week. Paris seemed far away; and loneliness touched him, for Paris was the hub of his universe. It had spawned and suckled him, fed and clothed his body. It had embittered and exalted him, cast him away and then taken him to its bosom again. He walked with the mighty of the city and its court, and yet the *Coquille*, the Thieves Guild, accepted him as a thief without compare.

Now he missed the dirty crowded streets, the warrens of the *Coquille*, and the sumptuous homes of the wealthy. He was of them all, and yet apart, for in him was a nagging devil which gave him no rest. He coined his *ballades* and songs, and their mintage was of the brightest—scintillating and darting and born of scorn and cynicism. He was French, and to be French was to be a Parisian, and to be a Parisian was to be all.

And yet now he lay beside a fire in a narrow glade a dozen leagues from Paris, waiting word from the *Coquille* that the Comte du Val did not search specifically for one Monsieur François Villon, Master of Arts, and oft-times rogue.

He grinned at Bagot, liking the sheer immensity of the man. Bagot was a thief, the King of the *Coquille*, his head like a shaven shadowed rock, muscles bulging the jacket of his shoulders. Friends they were, and something more, for their liking and trust was a thing born of the passing

As Villon lay back upon his cloak and watched the stars, Paris seemed far away; and loneliness touched him, for Paris was the hub of his universe.

A GREAT POET AND AN ARRANT RAPSCALLION GAMBLES HIS LIFE ON A GAME HE DOESN'T KNOW. . . . BUT THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING OF THE MAGICIAN ABOUT HIM TOO.

by WILBUR S. PEACOCK

years, and a hundred fights. Bagot was the broad blade, heavy and slashing, while Villon was the rapier, darting, flicking, never still.

And so Villon smiled at Bagot, and the huge thief toasted him with a gargantuan swallow of wine, then wiped the back of his hand across his mouth.

"You are a fool, François," he said without heat. "The Lady Catherine is not for the likes of you. To dally with her is to invite disaster. All Paris knows the Comte is to take her to wife within the month." He spread heavy hands. "Anyway, is she not English? How can a man talk with one who does not speak French?"

"Talk!" Villon's teeth flashed whitely in a laugh. "Why must a man talk with a maid—in words, that is?" He sobered at memory of Bagot's words. "And why should a withered maulkin like du Val take such a girl to wife? He is a vulture, a bald evil bird, who has forced a marriage because the Lady Catherine's spineless father lost a fortune in a game of thimbled *glic*."

He pounded one lean hand against the other, sitting and glaring at Bagot. His eyes were hard, and his voice lifted and rang.

"She sacrifices herself for her father, and none will lift a hand. What kind of men do we breed these days?"

Bagot shrugged. "Bah!" he said. "It is but a marriage of convenience, and such is fairly common. Yet must you play the addled gallant, thinking to stop the affair!" He turned his head. "And so here we sit, leagues from the city, because you carry calf's love for a wench to the point that you steal du Val's chess set and set his bullies upon our trail." He spat in half-anger. "Some day, Villon," he finished, "I shall watch you dance on air to a gibbet's tune."

Villon reached for the broiled chicken and ripped a tender leg away. His laughter returned now, amusement lifting in his eyes. He gestured grandly with the chicken leg, one booted foot kicking life into the dying fire.

"Go," he said. "Go back to the city. I would not keep you here against your wish."

Bagot belched and then squirmed in embarrassment at the poet-rogue's mocking smile. He scowled, then spat, shaking his head.

"Somebody has to protect you against yourself," he said.

They grinned then, mocking rogue and burly thief, for always such discussions ended. Neither would leave the other, not in troublous times, and such was now.

Villon relaxed, reaching for the skin of purple wine.

"Bagot," he asked, "how much is fifty thousand in gold?"

The huge thief shrugged. "How would I know?" he countered. "A king's ransom, a fortune, enough to wine and wench the rest of my life in luxury."

The poet-rogue nodded sleepily. "The chessmen are worth twice that, for they were jeweled, and made by Feruglia of Italy, for his king. Saul the Jew has offered fifty thousand for the set." He tossed the chicken bone into the dying fire. "Split down the middle, your share will keep you in wine and doxies for one half your remaining years."

"And you?" Bagot asked.

François Villon turned dark eyes toward his friend, and for a moment he was as other men, longing and desire like a flame within him.

"A house," he said, "and respectability. No longer a thief, but rather a poet. I'll dress in silk and velvet, with fine leather upon my feet and a full cellar for my kitchen. I'll—"

"—die of boredom," Bagot said then, knowing the depths of the poet-rogue. There was a strange gentleness in his tone. "No, François," he finished, "such a life is not for you."

"Saint Michael!" Villon swore then. "Would you deny—"

He spun, reaching for the blade at his side, sensing, rather than hearing, the whisper of sound at his back.

The knife came out of the darkness beyond the questing fingers of firelight. It flickered in a whirr of flashing speed, then *thwocked* solidly into the ground beside the fire.

Villon had whirled, half-crouched, gleaming sword lifted. Bagot had made no move, but tautness was in his thighs. Then the voice came from the shadows, a boy's voice, high and mocking:

"A fine couple of truands! Were I D'Estoutville, Provost of Paris, or even Malière, Captain of the Comte du Val's bullies, you would be dead by now."

Bagot blew his breath suddenly, and Villon laughed despite himself, sword lowering.

"Jehan!" he breathed.

The newcomer came striding from the shadows. *"Coquillards!"* he said in vast contempt, and plucked his knife from the ground, then cleaned it carefully before returning it to the sheath at his belt.

Bagot grinned. "Some day I shall squash you, little man," he said equably.

JEHAN bristled like a fighting cock. Standing, the top of his head was barely above that of the seated Bagot. Man he was, and as dangerous an antagonist as Villon ever hoped to meet. Masculine in every way but in his voice, he too was of the *Coquille*, and many was the time he had moskeneered at the sides of his friends. But small he was, a midget, barely the size of a young boy; and in a world built by larger men, he continually sought to prove his fitness, even when there was no need.

"Reach for me, you fat pig," Jehan said grimly. "I'll drop your hand at your feet."

"Enough, Jehan," Villon said then. "Is there a warrant out for my arrest?"

Jehan shrugged and reached for the wine.

"There is no warrant," he admitted, "but they search for you, as they do for many others. Five thousand is the reward offered for any information." He grinned, wry amusement in his eyes. "I could use five thousand in ruddy gold."

François Villon relaxed contentedly. It was safe, then, to return to the city. The Watch might arrest him, but suspicions without proof meant little. He had many friends who would be more than willing to give him any alibi he needed.

"What of Saul?" he asked.

Jehan finished the last of the broiled chicken, sucking his fingers into semi-cleanliness. He dropped the empty wine-skin, then yawned and stretched, and sat upon a mossy rock.

"He sends his wish that you will not be found and hanged. More important, he says payment awaits your coming to his home."

"Good!" Villon came lithely to his feet, scabbarding his sword and buckling it about his waist. "We'll leave now, for I hardly wish to walk the streets of Paris in the daylight—at least, not until a plan or two has been made."

"But, François," Jehan said, "I am weary. I've trudged the leagues out here, and my feet clamor for rest."

Villon weighed a knight in his hand, liking the feel of the chiseled gold. "So

"Up, little man!" Bagot rumbled.

"A pox on you," Jehan said without heat, but already was he up and kicking dirt upon the dying fire.

Darkness came, until eyes adjusted to the moonlight; and then they began their trek toward Paris. Three men—a giant, a midget and a poet-rogue: three friends.

They crossed the field and went through the trees, then took to the narrow road. A prowling dog growled at them, then fled in silence. A nocturnal bird wheeled low, then lifted and vanished. Moonlight silvered the land, and the air was crisp and clean.

Villon hummed softly as he walked, and contentment was in his heart. Events moved in an ordered way; there were no worries at the moment. By morning he would be safe at Saul's, a king's ransom ready to his hand. And within the day arrangements would be made with various people so that the Lady Catherine might be smuggled back into England. There, with the balance of the money from the sale of the chessmen, she could repay her father's debt.

There would be no hard profit in this bit of moskeneering, despite the talk he and his companions made. But there would be a laugh at the expense of Comte du Val; and there would be the remembrance of a young girl's gratitude. Yes, the game was worth the play; and so Villon hummed, and they walked in rhythm to the melody.

"Saint Michael!" Jehan swore then in sudden thought, and fumbled for

little," he said, "yet so valuable! Methinks the set is marked by the Devil."

a moment inside his shirt. "I was to give you this, and I forgot."

"Who gave it to you?" Villon asked, stopping and breaking the wax seal of the paper handed him.

Jehan shrugged. "It was slid beneath Saul's door last evening; that is all I know."

VILLON turned the paper into the moonlight, seeing the familiar handwriting and feeling the sudden swift beating of his heart.

And then a chill came to him, a spider of apprehension racing along his spine, as he read the words which lay outlined blackly upon the scented paper.

"*Dearest,*" the note ran. "*It is known that we have met secretly these many times. A servant followed and spied; and now they search for you. Do not return until all is safe.*"

There was no signature, save the letter "*C.*" for such was the manner in which the Lady Catherine signed her notes.

"François?" Bagot said then, studying the hard face of the poet-rogue. "Don't be a ninny. To return to Paris is to invite death."

"Don't be a fool, François," Jehan said warningly. "The Comte will have your head."

François Villon hesitated. And then he laughed aloud and balled the paper and threw it into the night. He felt no fear; there was only the heady thrill of knowing danger lurked behind each corner of the city. Even the Comte's powers were limited; for Villon too had friends in Court.

And so his laughter sped to the stars, and he took up his stride again.

"One thing at a time," he said to his friends. "First the chessmen, and then the problem of Lady Catherine. And after that, if the Comte so wishes, I shall cross a blade with him."

A meteor flicked in sudden white glory across the sky, and then winked out; and for a moment Villon wondered if his life, like that of the meteor might not flame for a brief moment and then—

"Come!" he said. "We've much to do."

The three walked onward. . . .

The day had passed, and now it was evening again, the moon not yet full risen, the horizon aglow with the red and gold and purple of a setting sun. Outside, the Street of Thieves was coming to life, as it always did when the sun finally vanished. It was a narrow street, a dirty one. Houses leaned crazily, like blowzened aged men, scabrous and ugly. Grass was rank and wild between the houses, and the street was pitted and ancient, a mud wallow after a rain, and a boil of dust when dry.

IT was a street of squalor. The Watch walked in trios, and a flash of a single coin could cost a man's life. Students from the University roistered here. And the Provost of Paris would have given a king's ransom to have an informer planted on this street.

For here half the crimes of a country were plotted. Wealth was here, gained at the expense of honest men. This was a thieves' lair, where a price bought anything. Stolen goods flowed in and out in a never-ending flood. Buyers and sellers dickered and swore and cheated; and yet all stood against the Watch when a showdown came.

And here it was that Saul the Jew had his home. Squalid it was on the outside, and the interior was but little better. But bars were on the windows and doors, and a regiment would have been decimated while trying to breach the walls; for here at times were wealth and jewels and hunted men, and Saul's bullies were tough and bold and fearless.

Standing at the window of the front room, and peering into the darkening street, François Villon sighed softly. Time dragged, and impatience bit at him. There was much to do this night, and his messenger had not yet returned with an answer from the Lady Catherine.

Saul watched from where he sat before a narrow table. Before him was a bottle of sour wine and the chessmen for which the Comte du Val hunted so desperately.

Illustrated by JOHN FULTON

"Lady Catherine," he said, "I came as soon as I received your message." He stiffened then, seeing the face of the seated figure.

"Sit, Villon," the Jew said at last. "It serves no purpose to be so restive. Sit and play a game of chess."

The poet-rogue turned about and came to the chair before the table, a wry smile upon his mobile mouth.

"Time presses," he said. "And as for chess, it is a game of which I know little or nothing beyond bare fundamentals."

He sat, and his eyes lighted at sight of the carved chess pieces. Works of art, all were, and a thousand gems flashed in myriad colors in the flickering lamplight. Feruglia had done his work well.

VILLON weighed a knight in his hand, liking the solid cold feel of the chiseled gold, examining the fine jewels with the eyes of a thief and connoisseur.

"So little," he said, "and yet so valuable! Feruglia is dead, as is his patron the King. Fouquet lost his championship, after receiving this chess set: and then Comte du Val was gifted with the pieces and lost both the Lady Catherine and the chessmen." He laid the piece back on the table. "Methinks the set is marked by the Devil, even as its use is known as the Devil's Game."

Saul spat contemptuously, hands rubbing, his greasy eyes fixed on the flashing stones.

"Bah!" he said. "Gold and diamonds and emeralds and rubies, nothing more. Worth a fortune, yes, but devil-marked, hardly. Anyway, you have no need to worry, for the set is mine now."

"I suppose—" Villon began, and then whirled to the door, at the sound of knuckles on the heavy reinforced panel. "The messenger!" he said, and went toward the door.

Saul threw a cloth over the table, then waited, while the poet-rogue opened the door on its short chain.

"For you, sir," a voice said, and a grimy hand thrust a folded note through the space. "A thousand thanks," it finished, when Villon replaced the paper with a large coin.

Then the door was closed and locked again, and Villon was eagerly tearing open the note and bringing it to the lamplight for perusal.

" 'The garden within the hour,' " he read aloud. " 'Hurry!' " And there was the familiar "*C*" as a signature.

François Villon smiled. "Tell Jehan, when he arrives, that I am to meet the Lady Catherine in the gardens of the church. From there we shall go directly to the meeting-place. Either he or Bagot may bring the money at that time."

SAUL shrugged. "I shall tell him and pay the money," he said. "But I agree with them that no doxie is worth so much."

François Villon grinned, and buckled his sword beneath his swirling cape. A feathered hat was tapped into place; and then he was ready, lean and arrogant and dangerous, an incurable romantic.

"A doxie, no," he agreed. "But the Lady Catherine is no doxie." His smile stilled for a moment. "She is like no one I have—" He shrugged. "No matter. But follow my instructions."

And then he had released the chain at the door and was through upon the grimy street, making for his rendezvous.

The moon was almost risen now, its light, soft and silvery, beginning to press away the shadows. Far away, a

minor beadle pulled a bell-rope at the Sorbonne, and candle-glimmer glowed faintly behind tight-locked shutters.

François Villon walked swiftly, making no effort at concealment. He had learned long before that skulking invited only a challenge from the Watch. And even now, two blocks ahead, he could see a captain dressing in a squad of the Watch, while black-robed students from the University hooted and jeered, ready now for their roistering of the night and inviting a fight with the Watch as a mere preliminary to other things.

Villon grinned; many was the time he too had baited the soldiers, risking a broken head for the fun of the moment. There was a singing in his heart, for now he was truly home. This was Paris, and he walked her streets. There an obese priest waddled complacently like a goose out of water; and closer, street mummers had begun their evening show, a flame-drinker beginning his act for the growing crowd, while more skillful members of the troupe did their work less flamboyantly, clever fingers lifting and emptying purses.

He strode along, cape swirling in the growing breeze, and when he passed the Watch, he lifted his hand in mocking salute, and then went unchallenged along the street. He passed the Pomme de Pin, glancing through the open windows at the diners. Hunger touched his lean belly; but he shrugged the feeling away, knowing the time for eating was not now.

For a moment he wished that Bagot was at his side. The giant was a good man in a fight, but he had had other matters to attend to this night, and so would not meet the poet-rogue until later.

And then Villon shrugged, conscious of his strength and skill and knowledge of Paris. The task, while dangerous, was comparatively simple. He had only to take Lady Catherine to a rendezvous with a smuggler. Within hours she would be in England again. After that—well, the Comte might scream and rant, but there would be little he could do.

And so Villon made his way to the gardens behind the Church of St. Anne.

Pilgrims passed, eyes downcast, making their way to the tomb of St. Genevieve. A judge in scarlet came by; and three dandies, foppish in the silks and velvets and feathers of the latest styles, went toward the Grant Rue St. Martin for an evening of gaming and wenching.

Villon gave little heed now, for the gardens of the church were close at hand. He went more slowly, keen eyes watchful, relying much now on the instincts which had saved him in the past. Lady Catherine had warned him that the Comte knew of their relationship; and it might be that Malière might be in hiding, waiting with others of the Comte's bullies.

But he saw nothing to arouse his suspicions. Farther along, a driver dozed upon the high seat of his coach. An early drunk staggered erratically. Light glowed softly behind the stained panels of the church windows. Peace was here, but surely no danger.

He slipped through the garden gate, peering through the shrubbery toward the cool marble bench where the girl always waited. He could see her slim cloaked figure awaiting him, and a pulse began to throb at his temple.

He hurried along the path of crushed stone, his boots telling of his presence. He saw Lady Catherine turn a bit, still in shadow, and his heart beat a little faster. Warm were her lips and soft her body; and even though she would be leaving for England shortly, he knew that the next few minutes would be his.

He looked about in caution, then stopped before the bench.

"Lady Catherine," he said, "I came as soon as I received your message." He stiffened then, seeing the face of the seated cloaked figure.

"As was expected," the Comte du Val said in thin harsh mockery, and his concealed blade licked out and touched Villon's breast. "Do not move, Master Poet," du Val continued dryly, "or I shall spit you like a fowl."

And then men came running, bullies in the white-and-gold livery of the Comte. Swords were naked in their hands, and eagerness lay in them. Villon was fast and brilliant with the sword, but they were numerous, and he could not win.

François Villon laughed then, a chuckle of wry scorn at his naïveté. Like the veriest ninny had he been truckled into a trap, snared by his own conceit. It was galling and humiliating; and yet because he was what he was, he found amusement in the situation.

"Do you leave me here, Sire?" he asked then. "Or am I to dance for your pleasure at some other place?"

He could not move, for other swords were at his back. And so when the Comte's sword flicked back and then forward in a burst of vicious speed, he could not avoid the blow. Agony beat at his head where the flat of the sword had lashed. And then he was on his knees, shaking his head like that of a wounded dog. Faintly he could hear the Comte's voice, and there was the taste of salty blood in his mouth. And then he was sinking into nothingness, and there was the feel of grasping hands.

"Take him to my home," he heard the Comte say; and when he tried to rise, a sword knocked him flat again.

After that, there was only darkness.

It was morning, and the new sunlight crept along the floor from the narrow windows. François Villon moved gingerly about the room, a livid bruise from cheekbone to temple, his head aching as it had never ached before. A dozen times had he prowled the storage room, seeking an egress, and finding nothing. The windows were but slits in the stone; no man could have escaped through one of them. And behind the single door, two of the Comte's bullies stood guard.

Villon sighed and tried to think. He leaned close to the nearest window, listening to the voices in the courtyard below. As in many homes of the wealthy, trade was carried on in the rear of the house. The Comte was no exception. He traded in wool, and smoke lifted from the trying fires, and half a hundred servants worked at the trying and carding and spinning of the wool brought there in huge bags by the sheepowners from outlying districts.

Villon had thought to drop a note, hoping to summon help, but Malière, the Comte's captain, had made certain nothing of the like could be done. He had been thorough, leaving Villon only his clothes, and then stationing a guard below the windows. No, there would be no rescue from the court below.

Villon had no illusions about his fate. He knew the vindictiveness of the Comte. There would be no such thing as a trial; there would be a more-or-less-short period of torture and then a rope. Such was the way of the Comte. And none would speak for Villon, for the Comte could concoct a dozen stories which would justify the hanging.

The Duc d'Orleans might have helped, for he was Villon's friend; but he was away from Paris, even if word could have been sent. There were others, too, but without knowledge, they could not help.

François Villon considered the possibilities, thoughts roiling, plan after plan discarded. Then he shrugged and sat upon a bench, waiting. He leaned back against a bag of wool; and now because he was resigned, the devil in him began to nag.

Poetry rose to his mind, and he laughed a bit at the wickedness of his thoughts. He hummed and tapped his boot, and then he stilled, hearing the clatter of chains upon his door.

The panel swung open, and Malière was there, pocked face mocking, the wormlike scar still running from lip to ear, a memento of a past crossing of swords with Villon. He would enjoy

the coming hours, even more than the Comte.

"Up, dog!" he said. "You are wanted below."

François Villon stood, flicking tufts of wool from his clothing. Then he went arrogantly past the captain, seeing the four bullies close in about him. His gaze darted about, searching, and found nothing but the bare walls of the hall.

"Ahead!" Malière said, and pricked the poet with a sword tip.

They walked, along the hall and then down a double flight of stairs. A door was open, and they went through, two bullies standing back to guard the entrance, the others ranging at either side of Villon, as he approached the desk.

"Messires!" Villon said, and halted.

ANOTHER man was with the Comte this morning, a man as large as Villon, but older, his wig white-powdered, the beauty spot black against his jaw. He leaned negligently against a mantel, studying the poet with unabashed interest.

"And so this is the fabled François Villon," he said. "I see nothing so splendid about the man."

The Comte du Val leaned back in his chair behind the desk, yellowed teeth exposed in a wide smile. He was small, his hairless skull without a wig. He was like a weasel, vicious, cunning, clever.

"He will hang well, Fouquet," he said. "In his conceit, he will hang very well."

Fouquet! So this was the chess master whose gift of a chess set to the Comte had set the pattern of Villon's actions. This was the man whose only defeat in chess had come this past year. Villon shook his head slowly; this one looked like a man who would be more at ease with sword or bow than with carven toys upon a board.

But the Comte was speaking now, and Villon listened.

"I shall hang you, of course, Master Poet," Comte du Val said evenly. "But you may save yourself a great deal of pain if you are of such a mind."

François Villon smiled, but now cold rage was in him. Men he had killed, but never had he mocked them or slain in cold blood. And still he smiled, for now he saw the wide windows of the room, and in him a dim hope had begun to grow.

"How may I serve you?" he asked.

"There is a chess set, of which, no doubt, you have knowledge," the Comte said, tenting skinny fingers judiciously on the desk. "If it were returned, the hanging would be a simple matter of a rope. There would be no water, no fire."

Villon's belly knotted despite himself. Twice had he undergone torture at the hands of the Bishop of Thibault. He wanted no more of it. But his face did not lose its smile, and he shrugged.

"I know nothing of any chess set," he said.

THE Comte's eyes frosted. "I will play no games with you," he said, and upturned a sand glass on the desk. "You have until these sands run through to give me an answer." He caught the side flicker of Villon's eyes. "If thinking at the window is best, go there by all means."

Malière chuckled throatily and stepped aside. The window was wide and inviting—and death, Villon knew then.

But still because he had a minute or two before the sands of the small glass ran down, he crossed to the window and leaned against the wall. He saw the bullies below, four of them, and knew there was no escape.

"The sand is a quarter run," Du Val said.

There was silence in the room.

Villon swallowed. He knew what his answer had to, and would, be. He could not tell of where he had left the chess set. To do so would be to betray his friends. They, too, would hang. His mobile lips thinned, and he tried to keep his thoughts from what would come soon.

"A half run," the Comte's thin voice whispered.

Rigidity came to Villon's back. He saw the man come into the courtyard, a huge wool sack tossed over one massive shoulder. He saw the studiedly stupid look of the man, the giant's body which towered him over the woolmaster.

"Oh, no!" he whispered, and recognized Bagot.

"Three-quarters!" the Comte's voice rose in impatience.

But Villon gave no heed. He watched Bagot until the giant disappeared from view, and a sickness was within him. Giant the man was, and a devil with a sword; but no single man could take this house.

Bagot only courted death; and Villon cursed himself then for placing his friend in jeopardy.

"It is run," the Comte said flatly. "Your answer, Master Poet."

VILLON'S hands were taut fists at his side. A pulse beat at his temple. Decision must be fast, before the huge Bagot could battle himself into a trap.

"I do not—" he began, turning from the window.

And there was the sound of a commotion in the hallway. A man swore, and a boy screamed gutter curses in a high angry voice. Heads swung toward the door; and then a soldier came through, thrusting a boy with rough hands, almost flinging him to the floor.

"What is this?" Comte du Val said angrily. "I said I was not to be disturbed."

The soldier tugged a forelock. "I tried to stop him, sire," he said, "but he twisted like an eel. He was in the house and almost here before I could catch him. He said he had something for you."

"I have," the dirty-faced urchin said, and his eyes swung about.

"St. Michael!" François Villon whispered then to himself, and caught his breath in sudden hope.

For the boy was Jehan, his disguise as a small street boy absolutely perfect. He was small, and his clothing was ragged and patched, and he was as dirty as any of the boys on the street. And now he stood in half-defiance before the Comte, clutching a sack in small hands, half-eager, half-fearful, but unknown to the Comte, as dangerous as a snake.

"Very well, boy, what is it?" the Comte said sharply, ignoring Villon. "And if you but waste my time, I'll have your back flayed."

JEHAN hunched against the anger, wiping his nose on a dirty sleeve. Then he reached up to lay the bag upon the desk.

"A gold-piece," he said. "The man said you would pay a gold-piece for this."

"What man?" the Comte asked, reaching for the bag.

"I do not know," Jehan said, fawningly. "He was big and dressed in dark clothes. He looked like—like, like that man there."

His dirty finger stabbed at Villon.

Villon stiffened. Then laughter surged, laughter and a liking for the midget. Jehan and Bagot, risking their lives for a friend, invading the lion's lair, not counting the cost! The sheer audacity of the move was worthy of the Devil himself.

The Comte du Val's gasp was like an explosion. He had opened the bag and uptilted it, and in a clattering rush of sound the contents fell upon the desk.

"The chessmen!" he whispered.

They glittered in the splendor of gold and red and green and the sparkle of diamonds. They bounced and settled, and now Fouquet was at du Val's side, reaching out to finger the carven pieces.

"This is the set!" Fouquet said in amazement.

"The gold-piece, Sire," whined Jehan, like the boy whom he pretended to be.

And only Villon caught the surreptitious movements of his hands at his waist. Villon knew then that half a dozen keen-edged knives were there,

"A gold-piece," the boy said. "The man said you would pay a gold-piece for this."

ready for the throwing. He tensed, and then forced relaxation. This was no route of escape; this was inviting death.

"Sire," he said then, striding to the desk, "can you not see that there has been a mistake? Could I have returned this fortune while still your prisoner?"

"Be silent," the Comte said sharply. "I do not understand this trick, but I do know it is a trick." He looked at Jehan. "The truth, or I'll have your tongue."

Jehan cringed in pretended fear, and his hands were still at his waist. Villon could see the slight tensing, and he knew that he had but seconds in which to act.

"Sire," he cried, "if this is a trick, how could I perpetrate such a thing? The boy knows nothing. Let him go. And as for me, I too am innocent of wrongdoing, as you can see."

His fingers moved in the secret sign language of the *Coquille*. *"Get out,"* he signaled. *"The odds are too great. Do not be a fool."* And then he lied, because he knew it was the only way: *"I have a plan, but it must be worked alone."*

He saw the indecision in the little man. And then Jehan was straightening, and the moment was past, and Villon sighed in soft relief.

The Comte du Val stirred the chessmen with a skinny finger, then glanced at Malière. "Lock these in the vault," he ordered. "And then you will endeavor to release a bit of information from this *canaille*."

Jehan spun. He moved with the speed which only the very small can have. He spun, and his outthrust hands smashed at two bullies, spinning them about. He was at the door before a man could move to stop him. He was at the door and through, and it slammed shut, a bolt snapped shut by his darting hands. Two soldiers lunged at the door, stopped by its weight, and only Malière's booming voice kept them from battering it down.

"Wait!" Malière snapped, and raced for the window. He bent through, his voice lifting to the soldiers below. "Corobet," he bellowed, "come and unbolt the door to this room. Champion, enter the house and capture the boy who is trying to flee. Bring him to me."

He turned back into the room, face flushed with rage; and then he froze, as glass broke and tinkled, and he saw the thing which Villon was doing. His hand flicked for the sword at his waist, and then he halted, held in thrall by the poet's calm voice.

"One sword, one sight of a bit of steel, and I tear out the Comte's throat," Villon said then, and the deadly certainty of his voice stilled every man.

For now he was at the side of the wizened Comte. He had caught up the hour-glass, smashing it on the desk; the jagged razor-sharp end was pressed against the throat of the Comte.

"Sire?" Malière said, not knowing what to do.

"We will go out," Villon said. "We will go out slowly, and if a bully tries to stop us, you die."

Color was back in the Comte's face now. Wizened he was, and brutal, but no coward. He held himself rigid, two thin worms of blood trickling from the pierced skin of his throat.

"Master Poet," he said, "you cannot win. I will not go willingly; and if you take me by force, even though I die, you shall not leave this house."

Villon was tense, watching the bullies, conscious of the truth of the Comte's words. Some men would have been craven, would have bargained; but he sensed the temper of this man, and so he knew the gamble had been lost. But still he must try to play the game through.

"It is worth the try," he said. "And at least, if I go down, I do take you with me."

Malière was shifting, ever so slightly, ready now for any move which the

Comte might desire. Only seconds more could the tableau hold. The Comte laughed softly; for he too knew the mettle of the man who held the broken glass. Villon would not kill in cold blood.

"It is checkmate," he said, his fingers touching the chessmen. "And yet I think I shall win the game eventually."

François Villon swallowed. He had made his gamble and lost. He tried to will his hand to wield the broken glass, but his arm would not move. His gaze went from man to man, then dropped to the Comte.

And François Villon laughed.

He did not move, and yet he was rakehell, and he swaggered, and his hawk face was bold and alive. An idea grew and leafed in his mind, and the dark amusement in him was a thing which could not be contained. He was a captor, and yet he was the captured. He could not win, and yet he could not afford to lose. He rattled the dice of his existence in his hand, and then cast them at the feet of death.

"Monsieur le Comte," he said then, "it is known that you are a man of honor."

"So!" breathed du Val, careful not to move.

"It is also known that you are a gambler, a man who does not make a bet, and losing, fail to pay."

Villon could feel the pounding of his heart. Never had he taken a risk such as this, never did he wish to do so again. And yet the devil in him would give him no peace now; he had cast the dice and so he must watch them spin into stillness.

"I will, therefore, gamble for my life," he said.

"The man is mad!" Fouquet said, but interest lay in his eyes, and a growing respect lurked there for this lithe man whose poetry and deviltry were both beyond the reach of ordinary men.

"Gamble!" Comte du Val said heavily. "You speak in riddles."

Villon's free hand went out and touched the chessmen on the table. "If I die, then you die, that is the way of it," he said. "Yet shall I risk all upon a single game of chess."

There was a rattle at the door, and it swung open to reveal two bullies. They stopped short at sight of the scene.

"*Wait!*" Du Val said, even as they streaked hands for swords. Slowly, very slowly, he turned his wizened face toward Villon.

"I have heard of you and your tricks," he said. "I think you have sold your soul to the devil. But I will listen."

"A single game, no more. If I win, you permit me to leave unharmed. If I lose, well—" Villon shrugged. "I shall see how the weight of my buttocks stretches a rope."

"This is incredible," Fouquet said then. "Know you not that the Comte du Val is one of the five greatest chessplayers in the kingdom?"

Villon's smile was on his lips, but his eyes were hard. "You too I shall play," he said. "Your reputation as a player must have been garnered through trickery, not skill."

He saw the flush and anger come to Fouquet. The insult had been deliberate, intendedly so, and now the chess master stood in a white-hot rage, unable to speak.

"Bah!" Villon said then. "I shall beat you as a man would beat children. In fact, even worse."

Fouquet barely breathed. "Strangely, now I look forward to seeing you hanged," he said.

"One game?" Comte du Val whispered.

François Villon spat in great contempt. "And so you are afraid," he said brutally. "Then listen to me. You, monsieur," he said to the Comte, "enclose yourself in another room, alone with a chessboard. And you, Fouquet, do the same in another room. I shall stay here, without boards and chessmen, playing only from memory. Both of you I shall game with, and both of you I shall beat."

"Done!" Comte du Val said then. "But of course, Malière and two more soldiers shall stay with you"—he chuckled—"to see that you do not—er—cheat."

"And the game?"

"Win, and you go free," Comte du Val said softly. "Lose, and—" There was no need to voice the payment which would be exacted should the poet lose.

François Villon snapped lean fingers in sudden scorn. "Bah!" he said. "Give me two men to carry word of the chess moves. After that, look to your skill—if you have any."

For a moment then, he thought he had gone too far. The Comte's face was purple with rage at the taunting, and Fouquet fingered the hilt of his sword as though to run his tormentor through.

And then the Comte straightened.

"What of the boy?" he asked the bully at the door.

"Sire, he must have escaped while I ran into the house," the soldier said apologetically.

Villon sighed softly. At least Jehan had made his escape. Now if only Bagot did not start a battle he could not win, there still might be a chance of escape for all.

"Forget him," du Val said shortly. "You will come with me, to serve as messenger between me and this—this poet." He glanced at Malière. "Lock this chess set in the vault at once," he finished.

He rose from his chair and went toward a side door, and Villon's voice followed mockingly, even as he tossed the broken glass to the desk.

"You may have the opening move, monsieur," Villon said. He swung

"If I die, then you die, that is the way of it," said Villon. "Yet I shall risk all upon a single game of chess."

to Fouquet. "You still game with me? If so, the first move is mine."

Fouquet made no answer. Without a word he went through the main door, taking a single bully along with him with a tip of his head. Malière watched silently, then gathered the fabulous chess set into the cloth bag and turned from the table.

"Watch him," he said shortly, and was gone.

Five bullies watched Villon. Sunlight glinted on naked steel, and the poet knew that any sudden move would invite slashing death. He tried to slow the beat of his breathing; but he could feel the slight dampness of perspiration on his face, and his hands knotted unconsciously. The tension within him was almost unbearable.

There was the dull clang of iron upon iron; and Villon knew then that the valued chess set had been locked again in the vault, a place completely inaccessible to the average man. Perhaps eight feet deep it was, but half a dozen wide and high, and heaped with rugs and stacked with paintings, and with the money boxes and table silver in neat array upon shelves. Few men could have picked the massive lock which held the turn-bar immovable.

François Villon's features remained composed, but a thought came to his mind then that he and perhaps Jehan would visit this house some night and again relieve the Comte of the chess set and sundry other valuables.

Now the time for such thoughts was gone. Malière came through the doorway, hand signaling a silent order. Four of the bullies drifted through the doorway, and now only Malière and another soldier guarded Villon.

"If you plan a trick, Master Poet," Malière said almost casually, "I hope it is now." His blade came free. "I still owe you much."

His finger touched the scar at his cheek, and involuntarily Villon shivered. Slowly, he moved to the window, waiting. Outside, soldiers stood, watching, waiting, hoping.

Du Val's messenger came, and Fouquet's stood in the doorway. Villon nodded confidently, but his throat was dry.

"You will whisper each move to me," he told the messengers. "The rest of you shall make no sound."

And so the fantastic gamble began. An ordinary set of chessmen and board was brought in. Du Val made his opening move, and Villon started

his play with Fouquet. The messengers walked stolidly, repeating the moves given by the three players. Minutes drifted by; and now the room was hot with sunlight, the air hard with tension. Villon leaned against the window, his hawk face tight with strain. And Malière watched, sword naked and thirsty, impatience within him.

An hour passed, and part of a second. Move had followed move, and the play was a brilliant thing of clever strategy. The single bully watched indifferently, but growing respect was in Malière's eyes as he realized the concentration of Villon's mind which was keeping every play in sight on the mirror of his memory.

Du Val's messenger left with another whispered play, and Villon wiped sweaty hands upon his trousers. A sudden commotion burst in the courtyard, and he swung about.

Bagot was there, the great wool sack slung carelessly over a massive shoulder, his free fist shaking blindly at the doorway through which he had just come.

"Pig, goat, offspring of a mismated ass!" he cried. "Cheat a man, would you, rob him of his last few pennies! The devil take you; I will burn this wool before I sell it to you at your stinking price."

Soldiers laughed, and the courtyard rocked with mirth, as the giant swung about and went in blind anger from the yard, to disappear into the street behind the courtyard wall. Even Villon grinned, and relief flooded him. Now Bagot was safe, too, free of danger.

He turned, still smiling, to receive Fouquet's message. He considered briefly, feeling the hot gaze of Malière upon him. Then he whispered his move to du Val's messenger, and watched both men vanish through opposite doorways.

He waited then, heart thudding solidly in his chest. He waited, and never had the seconds been so long. His life hung now by the merest wisps of thread. He stiffened, hearing the deliberate footsteps in the hall. Malière shifted, ready now for any movement.

"Monsieur Villon," Fouquet asked at the door. "are you satisfied?"

Villon sighed; and then he made a mocking bow. "Monsieur Fouquet," he said, "please accept my humblest apologies. You are indeed a champion of champions. To lose to you was an honor."

Fouquet smiled, good humor back in him again. "You played a brilliant game, monsieur," he said. "With a bit of practice and study, I should not like to meet you again in open challenge."

"Lady Catherine!" François Villon said—and in him was no longer capacity

François Villon nodded in answer, then caught the flicker of movement at the doorway through which du Val had vanished at the start of the gaming.

Comte du Val was there. His face was white now, white with the rage of a man who hates to lose. His skinny fingers were clenched together, and the tautness within him lifted tendons in his neck.

"Monsieur!" Villon said courteously, waiting.

The Comte took a single step forward.

"You have drunk with the devil," he said viciously. He caught his breath. "You outgamed me, Master Poet, and I am a man of my word. You may go in safety."

For a single infinitesimal moment, Villon could not move. This, then, was victory, and never had life tasted so sweet. He saw the disappointment in Malière's face: but he knew now that to crowd his luck might spoil everything.

"You are kind, monsieur," he said. "I bid you good day."

Three steps he took, past Malière, past Fouquet, and he was at the door. He hesitated, hearing the Comte's final words.

"You may leave in safety, monsieur," Comte du Val said thinly, "for that I promised. But at sundown, Malière and his men will search for you again. And next time, you trick me into nothing."

for surprise. "She says she can never repay you," said the smuggler.

Villon went ahead then, Malière at his back. He wanted to run, but dared not. He felt the stricture of the house about him like a prison, and he wanted the freedom of the air outside. He stopped only to take his belt and sword, when bade to do so by Malière at the outer door. And then he was outside, breathing deeply, buckling on his weapon.

"Until sundown, Master Poet," Malière said brutally.

Tension fled Villon then. He stood free of restraint, a blade at his side, all Paris before him. He could not be taken by such a niddering trick again, and so soft laughter came to his throat.

"I shall look for you, monsieur," he said; and then he was going along the street, lithely, swiftly, conscious of his strength.

And in him laughter bubbled and welled darkly, breaking in a slow flood. Wait until Jehan and Bagot heard his tale, wait until they sat before a table at the Blind Sow and their fists beat upon the planks in mirth at what he had to tell.

He laughed at the thought and lengthened his stride.

So it was that, at three hours past sundown, François Villon sat in a far corner of the Blind Sow, watching Gerimonde and the plump ale girls serving the customers. He was tired, and he ached as though he had fought a dozen sword battles. He had searched for Saul and Jehan and Bagot and found them not; and worry had come to him that the giant and midget might have tried again to rescue him, still thinking him a prisoner. Messengers had he sent to find the men, but none had reported success.

He scowled broodingly and sipped at a golden wine Gerimonde had tendered so proudly. Food lay untouched before him, and impatience bit at his vitals. He could make no move as yet, even though he knew Malière and half a hundred bullies sought him through the warrens of Paris.

And then a man was in the doorway of the tavern, fingers beckoning silently. A smile came to Villon's face, and relief touched him. Never had he been so glad to see a man as he was then to spy Bagot bulking against the dimness of the night.

He flipped a coin ringingly to the table, then went across the floor. Bagot's huge hand drew him outside and into the shadows, and the soft rumble of his laughter was a friendly warm thing in the night.

"It is good to see you, François," he said simply. "I thought blades might bring you free, and then I heard that you outgamed the Comte and won your freedom."

"So I did," Villon answered. "But what kind of a fool were you to think you and Jehan might fight all of Du Val's house to set me free?"

"Bah!" Bagot said uneasily. "It was but an idea." He turned away. "Come," he finished, "Jehan waits for us."

"Jehan! Where?" Villon frowned. "Is something wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong," Bagot said impatiently. "He waits at the Coq d'Or."

Questions hammered in Villon's mind; but there was an urgency in the giant which kept them from being asked. Silently, he paced at Bagot's side; and they went swiftly along the streets, hugging the shadows, avoiding the Watch, continually alert for Malière and his men.

And when at last they were at the Coq d'Or, Bagot drew the poet around to one side and into the shadows at the rear. Jehan was there, bobbing from a shadow, a smile on his bovish face, his small hand hard and friendly in Villon's.

"Such a gamble!" he said. "St. Michael, but the risk you took!"

François Villon stood with his friends, and felt the sting of tears in his eyes. They had risked themselves for him, and yet they gave it no thought. He tried to make his voice hard.

"Who thought of buying my freedom with the chess set?" he asked.

Jehan grinned. "I," he said, "I came to Saul's just after you left, and ran to be with you. I arrived to see you taken by the Comte's men. I could not aid you then, and so I thought perhaps you might be ransomed with what we stole." His small hands spread. "I had six knives in my belt beneath my shirt—and then you had to signal me to leave."

Villon nodded. "And well you did, or both of us would be dead." He shrugged. "Now, I suppose we must rob the Comte's house again."

"Again!" Bagot said.

"Of course." Villon squared his shoulders. "The Lady Catherine still has my promise of help—and Malière's men will not be at the house this night."

He stilled then, for the midget's foot had nudged a small cloth back into the moonlight on the ground, and from its open mouth came the chess set, glittering coldly.

"How—" he began, and Jehan cut him short.

"A vault is a strange thing," he said laughingly. "You take the lock from the loops of iron, and then a turn-bar is twisted, and a heavy cross-bar lifts inside and the door swings free. A vault is hard to enter—but any man can escape from it, if only he has the strength to lift the cross-bar." He grinned at the rogue-poet. "I hid within the vault, beneath a flung tapestry, thinking to sneak free and help you later. Then Malière placed the chess set within and locked the vault. Still I waited; and when I thought the time was ripe, I lifted the bar and emerged, carrying the chess set again, along with what loose gold-pieces I found in one chest."

Villon's laughter erupted uncontrollably. The sheer lunacy of the exploit was worthy of everything he had experienced. His laughter rose to the stars, and for a moment he was speechless.

And then he said: "Then that leaves only the matter of freeing the Lady Catherine." He snapped lean fingers. "I have an idea."

Bagot's fingers touched his arm. "I have more than that," he said, and his voice lifted in a brief command. "Come out, Milady."

She came from the shadows a dozen yards away, and she was lovely and as he remembered her, her hair spun silver in the moonlight, her eyes wide and dark.

At her side, naked blade gripped in hand, was the smuggler who had made a deal to deliver her to England.

"Lady Catherine!" François Villon said then, and in him was no longer the capacity for surprise.

She came to him, and he held her close, oblivious of the others for a moment. She murmured a few words against his chest, and the smuggler translated.

"She says she never can repay you," the smuggler said.

"But—" Villon began, and Bagot cut him short.

"I entered with a bag of wool, a huge bag of wool," he said, and pride was in him. "I broke a neck and hid a body, and then I emptied half the wool into a corner." He chuckled deeply. "The Lady Catherine made her escape inside the bag upon my shoulder, almost smothering, but safely." He glanced upward. "She must be gone within a few minutes, François, if she is to reach her home in safety."

"You fool, you great niddering fool!" Villon said to Bagot then, and the words were an accolade.

"We must go," the smuggler said shortly.

The girl spoke to Villon; then she thrust a scrap of paper into his hand.

"She said that the paper tells of where she will be in England," the smuggler translated. "She will not be with her father for some time. She said further that she will wait for you."

François Villon kissed her then, kissed her gently and warmly and put her from his arms. She turned and bent and held and kissed the midget, and then she straightened, and her soft hand was drawing Bagot down. Bagot squirmed like a country clod, pleased and yet embarrassed.

And then one last fleeting touch of lips to Villon, and the Lady Catherine was gone into the shadows, the soft sounds of her crying in the air, a few final words backflung.

"She said she loved you all," the smuggler said gently.

Villon cleared his throat, and he lifted a money pouch from his belt.

"This is for her passage," he said. "Tell her that what she needs will be sent to her father within a week."

Then the smuggler was gone; they watched the darkness, hearing the sudden clatter of carriage wheels upon the cobblestone. Echoes danced and then faded, and they were alone.

Jehan bent and thrust the chessmen into the bag again, then straightened.

"Let us get this back to Saul's," he said, and they moved about the building and into the street.

They walked without speaking, seeing the University students carousing a block away.

A church bell sounded softly in the night, and the words of the Watch, giving the hour, was a lonesome cry in the moonlight.

They walked, each intent upon hidden thoughts—a midget, a giant and a lithe thief whose heart rang with music and whose fingers were fitted for a sword.

Bagot said it then, struggling with the thought, and finally finding the words.

"You gamed for your life with chessmen," he said. "I heard it from a friend who heard it from a soldier of the Comte's house. How could you expect to win?"

"How!" François Villon's dark laughter stirred, and then burst forth in a flood of sound. "It was a simple thing."

"Simple!" Jehan's voice was dark with cynicism. "You admit you know nothing of the game."

"Ah, but Fouquet does," Villon said in mocking memory.

"Fouquet?" Bagot said. "But he beat you."

"Not me—but the Comte du Val," Villon said then. "I was but a postal station between Fouquet and du Val. When one made a move, I but passed word of that move to the other. I did not play—Fouquet and du Val played each other. And since Fouquet is a champion, and he played to prove his greatness—then he must win. Or so was my gamble."

"Fouquet against du Val—and each thinking he played you." Jehan's laughter came too, bubbling and effervescent.

And then Bagot bellowed in mirth; and the three of them were going along the street, content with the day's work, content in the others' company, wondering what the rage of Comte du Val must be by now, sheared as he was of the Lady Catherine and the chess set, and knowing surely of the trick by which he had lost a gamble.

"St. Michael, what a story this would be to tell!" Bagot boomed. "Paris will not be safe for a time, François—but then again, you can go to England, where the Lady Catherine waits."

"Does she now?" François Villon whispered.

He was French, and she was English. She was high-born and he was of the gutter. No matter that she owed a debt. No matter that their blood sang when they were together. No matter that she had given him an address where he could find her.

François Villon knew then that she was gone from him. He was a creature of the night, in his life and in his singing poetry. Respectability was but a dream which would never reach fulfillment. And so because he knew himself, he shredded the bit of paper and fed it to the wind.

"Think of me sometimes," he whispered to the night; and then he went ahead, whistling, anxious to find his true and final destiny.

ye Artickles of Capt. Kidd's Adventure Galley...

from a paper to be found among the Documents of Kidd's trial by the High Court of Admiralty... Here all hung up for view by that elderly respecter of *rocks & shoales:*

Peter Wells

1700 AD

1. Capt. Kidd and his shipe was to have fourty shares and any man that would come aboard the said shipe should have share of all such Treasures as should be taken.

2. If any man should Loose a Leg or Arm in ye said service, he should have sex hundred peices of Eight, or sex Able Slaves.

3. If any man should Loose a joynt on ye said service, he should have a hundred peices of 8.

4. If any man shipps himselfe aboard ye said shipe and should offer to goe away from her, he shall suffer what punishment ye Capt. and ye Company Quarter-Master shall think fitt, and shall have no share.

5. If any man should prove a coward in ye time of Engagement he shall have no share.

6. If any man breed a Mutiny in ye said shipe, he shall Loose his share, and shall have what punishment the Capt. & Qr.Mr. shall think fitt.

7. If any man be found to steal to ye value of halfe a peice of 8, he shall be turned ashore into ane inhabited place.

8. If any man be drunk in time of Engagement, he shall Loose his share, and have what punishment the Capt., etc., shall think fitt.

9. The Doctor's chest, all ye Disabled men and the provisions were to be payed before any dividend was to be made.

10. Capt. Kidd was to have the refusall of all such goods as are neccessary for a Man of War.

11. Capt. Kidd was to be payd for his Armes sex Pounds a man of ye first money as was made.

12. Capt. Kidd was to have the choice of ye first or second prize to make a Mann of Warr off.

13. The Boat going after any saile and taking her without reach of ye Shipe Guns, she not having above ye value of 500 peices of 8, the Boates company were to have itt.

14. If any man does not obey ye comand to board ye said shipe he shall have what punishment the Capt. and ye Company Quarter-Master shall think fitt.

15. If any man that spyes a Saile, and she proves to be a prize, he shall have 100 peeces of 8, or 2 shares of plunder.

signed: Joseph Palmer

{Principal King's Evidence at Kidd's Trial}

"They was no Lambs, was Kidd's Men!!"

Wagons West

IT all began with a fairy tale: An ancient Bishop of Lisbon, pursued by conquering Arabs, took boat for some unknown goal, landed on the Pacific Coast, and led his men across the mountain range of the American Southwest eleven hundred years ago. By what route he came does not appear. Fairy stories cannot be tied down to such details. He conquered the savage Indians and founded a nation called Cibola, with seven great cities. A mighty civilization developed. Each city became a treasure-house of gold, silver, and jewels.

Nobody knew exactly where the cities were—because, of course, there were no such cities. There was no Eighth Century militant churchman who crossed sea and mountains, any more than there was a Jack who climbed the beanstalk. . . .

But the early Spanish conquerors who took over Mexico and made it New Spain in the early Seventeenth Century believed pretty much everything that anybody told them. They probably heard the Seven Cities stories from the Indians they captured. The Indians were pretty good liars themselves. The Spaniards, passing their reports along, undoubtedly added some fancy episodes from their own excited imagination. They organized treasure hunts which covered a great space of unexplored country. They did not find Cibola. But they had a pleasant time slaughtering the Indians. Some they burned alive for an example. The idea seems to have been to teach the red men the superiority of the white race.

After the Spaniards had failed, the hardy frontiersmen of this country took up the search. Treasure-tales have always captured the imagination and stirred the blood of pioneers. Even if the rumors were false, even if there were no golden cities, it was as good an excuse as the next for adventure. Because of these restless and daring spirits, Spaniards first and Americans later, the Santa Fe Trail stretched slowly and uncertainly across the map. It opened up and developed the great and rich Southwest. But for its perils and excitement the boundary of our country might have stopped not far west of the Mississippi River. We might not now have Texas and New Mexico and all that Southwest territory to the Pacific. Today there are prospectors and mountaineers who still talk of Cibola and half believe that the Seven Lost Cities may yet be discovered in some unexplored desert or mountain-blockaded land of forest and cañon.

SPAIN, in the 1500's, was a powerful nation. Its men were soldiers, explorers and adventurers. One of the boldest was Cabeza de Vaca, which means "Head of a Cow." Landing in Florida early in the century, he led his little band of men west to the Gulf of Mexico. Across the Gulf, he knew,

Copyright, 1951, by Samuel Hopkins Adams.

THE EPIC STORY OF THE FAMOUS SANTA FE TRAIL AND THE AMERICANS WHO FIRST DROVE THEIR HEAVILY LADEN WAGONS TO TRADE WITH THE OUTPOSTS OF MEXICO.

by SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

Fifteen, even twenty miles a day, was not too much over the pleasant grassy flats. The greenhorns thought it was going to be like that all the way.

lay the Spanish province of New Spain. He and his followers knocked together a boat of driftwood, stripped themselves of their shirts for sails, and made the passage more by good luck than good sense. They were captured by Indians, from whose tribal legends De Vaca built up a picture of wonderful cities to the north.

De Vaca gathered all the information that he could. It was mainly misinformation. But he did not find that out until later. With a few companions, he escaped from captivity. There were no maps, no trails, no compass, no guidance of any sort. Asked, afterward, how he set his course, he is reported to have replied that he asked the blessing of God, pointed his nose at the North Star and followed it.

Exactly what he did find will never be known. He turned up in Mexico City with tales that made the Spaniards' eyes bug out. We can imagine the scene in the viceroy's palace when the gaunt and tattered explorer arrived with his report. The Spanish dignitaries would be gathered in the council room to bombard him with eager questions.

Had he really found the lost Cibola?

Certainly. He had entered one of the cities.

What was it like?

Wonderful. The houses had roofs of gold and jeweled doorposts.

Were the inhabitants civilized?

Oh, yes! They spoke Spanish. They were skilled artisans and builders. The women were beautiful.

Trapper Jim staggered to his feet. A buffalo! If they could kill it, that might mean life for them.

They wore rich garments, set with precious metals and gems.

How far was this wonderful country?

Very far. Eighty, ninety, one hundred days.

Was the voyage arduous?

Terrible.

Indians?

Worse. Giants! They lived in caves in the mountains and ate the smaller Indians alive.

Was there any game?

Much. That was one of the perils. The bears were as big as elephants. There were birds of prey that could carry off a mule. (The explorer had doubtless seen some of the nine-foot wingspread mountain condors—of which a few still survive in the California wilds.) And in one river, three leagues wide, he had seen cow-sized fish that spouted boiling water. There were other risks of the trail. One day the sun might be so hot that men's whiskers shriveled on their faces. The next night a blizzard would sweep down fit to freeze the blood in one's veins. Poisonous vapors jetted up from the earth. At times they had been almost smothered by clouds of steam. Oh, yes, it was a bad, bad journey! He would advise taking it only with a large military force.

From all that has come down to us, Señor Head-of-a-Cow must have been a gentleman of lively imagination.

The Spaniards swallowed it whole. One of the most excited listeners was a Franciscan friar named Marcos de Niza. Friars, in those days, did a good deal more than say their prayers. Brother de Niza was a man of action as well as imagination. He applied to the Spanish viceroy for permission to organize his own *atajo* (expedition) and locate the rest of the Seven Cities. He further announced his intention of converting the Indians and perhaps the giants, though probably not the bears and condors.

Permission was given, and De Niza set out at the head of a well-armed band. He could hardly have followed the earlier explorer's route, for he came out at what was probably Pueblo, in the Rocky Mountains. For some unexplained reason he made no attempt to enter it. But he did bring back a glowing report of a great city as splendid as Madrid, and roofed in gold. Maybe he had been deceived by a mirage. Or maybe all those early Spaniards were natural-born liars. Again the viceroy took it all for gospel. He sent out a large military expedition this time, twelve hundred men. The orders were to capture and annex the city for the glory of the Church and the enrichment of Spain.

The great Spanish grandee and soldier, Francisco Vasquez Coronado, then Governor of New Spain, was appointed head of the enterprise. He had already led a less ambitious journey north into the wilds. If anybody could find and take the lost cities, Coronado was the man. He set forth with all the style of an army.

Out in the wilds of a high desert, a lone figure mysteriously appeared. The official report calls him El Turco. He was certainly not a Turk. He may have been a half-breed or possibly a Negro. He spoke Spanish.

"What," he asked, "does the great Capitan-General seek?"

"Cibola and its lost cities," Coronado answered.

"I know all about it," the stranger said. "Its chief city is Quivira. It is lofty as the tallest pine, and glistens with gold and silver."

"Where is it?"

"Many days' journey to the north. I will lead you."

After a month's travel, the expedition came out of a low pass in the foothills, in sight of a settlement on the slope.

"Is this it?" Coronado asked his guide.

"This is it," El Turco answered.

The Captain-General's eyes took in the mean little huddle of adobe huts.

"This is the wonderful city of gold and jewels?" he asked.

El Turco became uneasy. "This is Quivira," he faltered.

Coronado turned to a lieutenant. "Take this man and hang him," he ordered.

As there was no tree handy, the unfortunate guide was strangled.

Coronado and his dwindling band strolled about for three years without

finding any city worth annexing. They did find Indians, but if their mission was to convert the savages to Christianity, they set about it in a peculiar way. Near what is now Albuquerque, they captured some two hundred of them and burned them alive. However uncivilized, the red man has his own sense of logic. From his experience with the Spanish conquistador, he concluded that the white man was "bad medicine," to be killed if possible; if not, to be avoided. Doubtless, the many barbarities committed by the tribes in the succeeding centuries followed the tradition handed down from the Spaniards. The savages were no worse than the apostles of civilization.

LITTLE is known definitely of Coronado's trails, but he certainly discovered the Grand Cañon, and seems to have ranged as far east as Kansas before making up his mind that there was little glory and less profit in that adventure. In the course of his travels, he abandoned a flock of sheep and some horses, which thrived and grew up with the country. So, but for the dead Indians, he left the region better off than he found it.

Upon his return to Mexico City, the leader asked at once for Marcos de Niza. The friar had gone elsewhere, which was doubtless just as well for him. There were plenty of trees in Mexico City, and it is not likely that his belonging to the clergy would have saved him from a noose, by order of the Captain-General.

The next seeker for the Seven Cities was Don Castaño de Sosa, who headed north in 1591 with an oxcart train. The carts traveled not on proper wheels, but on solid cottonwood logs, which must have been rather bumpy for the drivers. De Sosa seems to have been interested in three main lines of Indian trade—furs, salt and turquoises. For these he was prepared to barter plumes from macaws, parrots and other gay-hued birds. He left no record of dead Indians, but that may have been an oversight.

His successor did better in that respect. Don Juan de Oñate was a rich silver-mine owner. Like most rich people, he wished to be richer. The way to achieve this desirable end, he thought, was to discover the Lost Cities and loot them. He financed his own *atajo*, and in 1598 set out for the unknown with eighty-three wagons, rolling on round log wheels, and one hundred and thirty followers bouncing and jouncing in the wagons. Don Juan seems to have been an exceptionally cleanly gentleman, in a period when only royalty bathed as often as once a week (and not all royalty by any means), for he took along a silver bathtub. One can imagine the astonishment of the oxen at the mighty jingle-jangle back of them when the wagon hit a rock.

Like his predecessors, Oñate missed the fabulous cities. His fighting men, however, had an enjoyable battle with an Indian tribe, killing more than six hundred of them. As the Spaniards numbered only seventy, this was considered a meritorious performance. On his northbound trek he by-passed the pueblo which was later to become Santa Fe, but reached it on his return. In all, the expedition was gone about three years. What they did in the way of trade is not recorded.

Other explorers went in other directions. They found little reward, but each seems to have killed a satisfactory number of Indians. One such band founded Santa Fe in 1609. Others penetrated into the Rockies and probably got as far east as the Missouri. They left no trails, established no settlements. The only landmarks of their fruitless wanderings were the bones of their victims.

Chapter Two

AMERICANS were not as easily fooled as Spaniards. Nevertheless the Cibola tales found many listeners and some believers on the frontier. It might not have been so easy to organize expeditions into the wild unknown regions without the dazzling prospect of gold and silver, emeralds and rubies. The intelligent leaders may not have taken much stock in this sort of thing. But it was a spur to the ambition of the young and restless.

Pioneers began to get excited about the Southwest at the very beginning of the Nineteenth Century. As early as 1800 they followed the rivers, trapping beaver, otter and mink; killing bear and buffalo and sometimes being killed by them. Some of them traded with the Indians—cheap trinkets and gay cloth for gold nuggets. Where did the gold come from? The Indians would not tell.

They did tell of the far-away city of Santa Fe. It was, by their accounts, a wonderful place, rich and eager for trade. Their reports must have fitted in neatly with the legend of lost Cibola. The trappers brought the news back to the frontier, and so to the great fur-trading center, St. Louis. It came to the ears of a prosperous trader named Morrison. Being nearly forty, he considered himself too old for adventure. But he very much wanted to set up trade with that wealthy and mysterious city.

He found a vigorous and daring young man, a Creole named Le Land, willing to act as his agent.

"Give me the goods and the mules," Le Land said, "and I'll get them to Santa Fe."

"There's no trail," the trappers warned him.

"I'll make my own trail," the Creole said.

Little is known of his reckless venture, except that he started out in 1804 and did get through with several mule-loads of calicoes, muslins and woolen goods. Le Land was more enterprising than honest. He sold the too-trustful Morrison's merchandise, pocketed the proceeds, married a Spanish-Mexicana, and settled down. Mr. Morrison might whistle for his money. Le Land never came back.

So far as is known, he was the first American to make the dangerous journey from the East. He left no trail.

A year later James Purcell, or Pursley, turned up in Santa Fe. He was footsore, his clothing was rags and tatters; but his "possible sack," the large bag in which frontiersmen carried such spare parts as leather patches, needle and thread, and odds and ends, was heavy with gold nuggets. The alcalde summoned him for questioning.

"Where did you find it?"

"Up in the Platte River country." As the Platte River was a thousand miles long, this told the official all that the prospector wanted him to know, which was not much.

"Draw me a map," the Mexican directed.

"What for?" Pursley asked.

"I'll send a detachment of cavalry back with you."

"Oh, no!" Pursley replied. "That land belongs to the U. S. A." (He was probably wrong, but he meant well by his country.) "If your soldiers go up there, they'll take it over for Spain. No sir, Your Excellency!"

No amount of persuasion could move him. He did not go back to the source of the gold, and died without giving up his secret. Fifty years later, when that part of the Rockies did belong to the United States, prospectors who knew about Pursley located and worked his mine.

Like those who had gone before him, Pursley left no trail.

THE next known visitor from the East was the famous Zebulon M. Pike. Captain Pike, with a small squad of surveyors in uniform (they were actually soldiers) crossed the line from the Louisiana Territory into Mexico in 1806. The territory had recently been annexed, and the boundary was uncertain. The young officer may have thought that he was in his own country when he built a fort on the Rio del Norte.

The Spaniards thought differently. They rounded up the invaders and

escorted them to Santa Fe to explain to the authorities. They wished to know what the *Americano* was doing on Spanish soil.

"Just making some maps and surveys," Captain Pike answered.

Maps to where? the Spaniards asked. The Captain explained that he was interested in trade between the two nations. If he could lay out a short trail, it would help.

All very well, the Spaniards said, but wasn't he really there to capture and annex territory to the United States?

"Why, a goat couldn't live on that land, let alone a good American," the explorer said. "We don't want it."

"Then why have you built a fort?" the questioning official demanded.

Captain Pike had an answer for that one too. "In case of attack by the Indians," he said.

His captors were not satisfied. They held him prisoner for a time, then took him on a tour to Chihuahua and other cities. Perhaps they intended to impress him with the might of New Spain. He was more impressed with the undeveloped riches of the country and the opportunities for trade. When he was released, he returned to his own country with glowing reports of business opportunities. He also explored part of the Rocky Mountains and left his name on one of them. Nowadays flivvers bearing the old-time legend, *"Pike's Peak or Bust,"* whiz along at sixty miles an hour over the same route which he and his mules painfully traveled at ten miles a day.

Captain Pike may well have been telling the truth when he said that his only interest was trail-finding and trail-making. But he left no trails.

By this time the Spanish authorities were becoming suspicious of the enterprising "gringos." They had treated Captain Pike kindly, but the next visitor got a rough welcome. A dozen traders who set out for Santa Fe in 1812 were seized and thrown into jail as spies. Of this lot, who were held in captivity for nine years, there are records of only three. James Baird, Samuel Chambers and Robert McKnight were set free and left to find their way back to the Missouri River as best they might. On the way, McKnight was caught and scalped by the Comanches. The other two got back to safety after severe hardships.

Thus far, the Spaniards were probably within their rights. The Americans were trespassers. In the case of Auguste P. Chouteau, the Spaniards were in the wrong. Chouteau was a man of wealth, and a founder of the great Missouri Fur Company. In 1810 he led a party of trappers across the Rockies. It was the first to spend a winter west of the mighty range. Returning with a rich haul of beaver, mink and otter, he organized a powerful caravan of nearly fifty men to work the almost untouched fur country at the headwaters of the rivers Arkansas and Platte. On the way they were attacked by a small army of the warlike Pawnees, who might have destroyed them but for the refuge of a thickly wooded island in the Arkansas River. Sheltered behind the cottonwood trees, the little force poured a withering fire into the Indians. It was the savages' first experience of powder and ball. They were beaten off after heavy losses. Chouteau put up a log fort in which he left half of his force. The other half he led westward to the mountains. They were peaceably gathering pelts in the spring of 1817 when a squad of more than two hundred Spaniards surrounded the encampment. Odds of ten to one were too heavy for even the hardy pioneers. There was no question of putting up a fight. The commanding officer read his orders. He was to take them to Santa Fe.

Chouteau protested. The territory in which they were operating was not Spanish. If it belonged to any nation, it was the United States. He was wasting his breath. The little band was taken to Santa Fe and thrown into jail. Some were put in irons. At one time the governor threatened to shoot them as spies. Their quarters were wretched, their food coarse and scanty. All their property was confiscated. After holding them prisoner for forty-eight days, the governor thought better of it and let them go. But he did not return the thirty thousand dollars in merchandise and money which he had seized. From that day Chouteau never liked Spaniards. One can hardly blame him.

It was this sort of injustice that stirred up hard feelings among the Americans. A quarter of a century later it boiled over in the Mexican War, which brought the whole Southwest under the American flag.

Notwithstanding Spanish hostility, trade-hungry Americans continued to penetrate deep into Spanish territory. The Glenn-Fowler band seem to have got on well enough with the Spanish officials. They even received permission to hunt and trap. They too brought back "many strange and marvelous stories of inexhaustible wealth in the precious metals" to be found in the wilds.

All these ventures traveled by different routes. They left little trace for those who followed. Unless hoofprints in the sand, ashes of campfires, and bones of slain animals and enemies are to be taken for landmarks, these early pioneers were not trail-makers.

William Becknell who came next, was. Because of his daring and enterprise, what began as a trail became a highroad of empire.

Chapter Three

HUNTERS and trappers on the unmapped prairie-land sometimes ran across salt licks. Deer, antelope and buffalo haunted these places. A few were hastily and crudely mined, and the product brought back to the frontier towns for sale. It is probable that salt is what first took Captain William Becknell into the wilderness. His business was that of salt-maker until he found Indian trading more profitable and interesting.

By the time the War of 1812 was settled, Becknell was a known and respected figure along the Missouri River. It is possible that he got his title of Captain at the time, though that part of the nation knew little and cared less about the fighting going on in the East and South.

Becknell had little education. In the few documents which he left, his spelling is something to marvel at and puzzle over. In his letters, *"knife"* is *Knif* (with a capital *K,*) *"sugar"* is *"shuger,"* and *"oaeght"* you can puzzle out for yourself. (Or, if you can't, it was the Becknell spelling of the verb, *to eat.)* But if he could not spell, he had other acquirements.

He could find his way through trackless country. He knew the habits of animals, Indians and frontiersmen. These latter were rough-and-ready individualists, jealous of their independence. Nobody could tell *them* what to or not to do. Becknell knew how to handle them. He had the knack of quiet authority. He was shrewd, brave, hardy and honest. Men respected him.

Even with the Indians he was honest, which was by no means true of many early traders. He did not get them drunk on the terrible raw "trade whisky" and cheat them. Because they passed the word along that he could be trusted, he was able to go safely where others would have been in danger. With each venture he penetrated farther and farther west.

In the fall of 1821 he set out with a small pack-train to trade with the Indians. There were only four men in the band. Their pack mules carried perhaps five hundred dollars' worth of cheap goods. At a crossing of the Arkansas River, they met two Mexican *caballeros.* The Mexicans were about to return south with a little gold and a few turquoises and semi-precious stones, received from the savages in exchange for bright-colored feathers.

"Half of the men that go in up there never come out."

What were the *Americanos* doing there, they asked.

Looking for Indians to trade with, Becknell said.

"Why waste trade on savages?" one of the riders said.

"What else should we do with our goods?" the Missourian asked.

"Bring them to Santa Fe. They will go like hot *tortillas.*" They talked volubly of the fancy prices which the cheapest cotton cloth brought in the city. The *Americanos* had but to show their goods in the marketplace. But Captain Becknell shook his head. He had heard about the fate of the McKnight-Baird-Chambers expedition.

"Not I!" he stated. "I don't want to rot in a Spanish jail."

The two horsemen exchanged glances and burst into excited protest.

Hadn't *el Capitan* heard? Mexico had risen against the Spaniards and driven them out. Mexico was free. Its citizens wanted nothing better than to trade with the *Americano* neighbors. *El Capitan* and his followers need fear no trouble. They would be welcomed. *Viva Mexico! Viva los Estados Unidos!*

It sounded good to the Becknell group. They held a council and decided on Santa Fe. The *caballeros* gave them plain directions for the trail, bade them farewell, and set out upon some private venture of their own—probably to take another look for the Seven Lost Cities of Cibola.

The trip was not a hard one. The Americans reached Santa Fe with their merchandise in good condition. But at first sight of the place, they were sorry they had come. Everything they heard had led them to expect a lordly city of tall and stately buildings, with wide streets and squares peopled by richly dressed citizens.

Instead they stared with disappointed eyes at a dreary stretch of low mud houses interspersed with straggling cornfields. Even the famous plaza seemed to them a poor affair with its raggedly built cathedral and governor's palace. The people were worse than the place. Gambling seemed to be their main activity. Everybody gambled: soldiers, merchants, priests, peons and beggars. They cast dice or dealt cards in the open streets, beneath the scraggly trees of the plaza, on the cathedral steps.

A squad of soldiers was languidly drilling before the palace. Some had no coats; others had no trousers. There were a few long-barreled rifles in the detachment, but mostly they were armed with lances or bows and arrows. Presently they wearied of the drill. Without any order from the shabby lieutenant in command, they broke ranks and sat down. Some went to sleep; others fell to playing cards.

The disgusted Americans felt sure that there would be no trade worth their while in Santa Fe. They were never more mistaken in their lives. No sooner had they led the pack-mules forward, than they were surrounded by a surging, chattering, gesticulating crowd. Members of the governor's household appeared and pushed through the mob. Merchants fought for places. Eager hands helped to unstrap the pack. The soldiers got up and tried to restore some order.

What did the *Americanos* have to sell? Silks? Ribbons? Calicoes? Velvets? Whisky? Nails? Rope? Pepper? There was an eager demand for all of them. Also for tea, salt, tobacco, knives, candle-wicking, starch and brooms. It was clear to the strangers that pretty much everything in their packs was salable. They were only sorry that they had not brought

ten times as much. So were the Mexicans.

Salable, yes. But for what? These people did not look as if they had any money. Again the newcomers were one hundred per cent wrong. There was plenty of money, gold and silver. Or maybe the "gringos" would prefer turquoises or emeralds, by which the Mexicans meant olivines or other semi-precious stones. The difficulty for the traders was not lack of money but a surplus of it. For every item of goods in their packs, there were twenty pushing, yelling, demanding, cursing customers.

Captain Becknell had figured that the total load of goods might be worth five hundred dollars. At the close of trade, each member of the band had that much, and more. This beat salt-making, trapping and Indian trading all hollow.

The Captain spent a pleasant winter in Santa Fe. He left with urgent invitations to come back, bringing more and better trade with him. On the return trip he had plenty of time for thinking. His thoughts ran along simple mathematical lines. If a small pack-train could make as much money as he and his companions were taking back to Missouri, a big *atajo* could make a lot more. And if mules which carried a pack of three hundred pounds, top weight, apiece, could be hitched to a wagon carrying three thousand and up, what would that figure out to? A nice big fat profit, Captain Becknell thought.

Wagons were the answer. But no wheel had ever turned beyond the Missouri River, headed for the far West. Could a caravan make it? Becknell did not know. But he intended to find out; he was that kind of man.

Chapter Four

AT the edge of the town of Franklin, Missouri, a cloud of dust overhung a rough temporary camp. It was a scene of activity and confusion. Horses whinnied; mules hee-hawed; dogs barked, while men were running here and there, shouting orders, exchanging information, sorting out merchandise from the piles scattered about in the dust. The flag of the United States of America floated in the warm late-May breeze, above a tent. The flag had only twenty-four stars, for this was the year 1822. Inside the tent a middle-aged, stocky, red-headed, red-bearded, restless-eyed man sat at a raw deal table, studying an inked-in map. This was Captain William Becknell, organizer of the expedition. Hurrying men rushed in and out, asking questions and receiving directions. The next morning, camp would be broken, and the expedition would head into the little-known land to the west. Somewhere out there was the Mexican boundary. Nobody knew exactly where. The Indians still thought the land was theirs. But who cared what an Indian thought?

Curious townspeople were clustered about the camp. They were curious, because there was an air of mystery about the undertaking. Captain Becknell had advertised for "a company of men destined to the Westward for the purpose of trading for Horses and Mules; and catching wild animals of every description." Nobody believed that this was the truth—at least, not the whole truth. The town marshal was interviewing a tall, blue-eyed, tight-lipped individual known as Trapper Jim, in the hope of finding out something.

"How come you signed on with Cap Becknell, Jim?"

The trapper looked up from cleaning his gun. "Why not? He's a good man."

"I thought you was an *engagé*. Didn't you work for the Hudson's Bay Company? Or was it for Mr. John Jacob Astor?"

The man shook his head. "I been a freeman these two years."

A hunter or trapper who worked for the great fur companies was called an *"engagé."* When he cut loose and went out for himself, he was a "freeman."

"I guess you're hunting more than beaver this trip," the official said with a wink.

Trapper Jim looked innocent. "Prime skins are fetching six dollars apiece," he said.

"Gold's fetching more than that. Ever hear of the Seven Lost Cities of Cibola?"

The trapper smiled. "Everybody's heard of Cibola."

"And you don't believe there's gold there?"

"Trail-talk," the freeman said.

"I reckon you don't believe in Santa Fe, either."

"Oh, certes! Captain Becknell's been there."

An old fellow with one arm thrust his grizzled head forward. The other arm he had lost from a poisoned arrow wound in the Shoshone country. That is probably why he was called Indian Isaacs. "You headed for Santa Fe? They'll throw you in jail."

"Not me," the freeman said. "I don't want any Mexicanos. I'll do my trading with the Indians."

The Osage breathed a cloud of smoke downward. Captain Becknell followed suit. One puff for earth.

"Arrows for bullets. That's the kind of trade you'll get," the old man said sourly.

"Don't worry," the marshal said. "They'll never get as far as the bad Indian country. Not with those wagons."

A pudgy little teamster broke in, addressing Trapper Jim excitedly. "You ain't figurin' on takin' *wagons* on the trail!"

"That's the notion," the other said laconically.

"There's never been a wagon-train west of the Big Muddy," (the Missouri River) the little man said, "and there never will be. Cap Becknell must be loco."

He proceeded to list the many reasons why a wheeled vehicle could not go through. Between the Big Muddy and the Rocky Mountains were many watercourses, large and small. In all that six hundred miles there was neither bridge nor ferry. Fords, yes; but what of the floods? Mules and horses could swim. Could a heavy "Pittsburgh" swim, loaded with two tons of trade? How could they get their loads up and down the steep banks of the river-bottoms? What did they know about the swamps that bordered the rivers? Had they had any experience of quicksands? Suppose they did reach the foothills! The passes were choked with boulders as big as houses; you had to unpack your critter to get him through.

And look what a temptation a wagon-train would be to prowling Indians! No, no! They'd never make it. They'd lose their wagons and probably their scalps.

It was a motley crew that milled about in the enclosure. Only one other man of the thirty besides the Captain was forty years old. This was Harmon Gregg, who had had experience with mule-trains and the slower ox-trains from the East. Ewing Young and Joseph R. Walker had taken the Santa Fe trip of the previous year. William Wolfskill, a gently bred Kentuckian of twenty-four, had joined because he had heard golden tales of the Far West. He was looking for a place to his liking where he could settle down and make a homestead. He was a dead shot, and would be useful both on the game-trail and in case of Indian trouble.

Of the others, a dozen were mountain-men like Trapper Jim, as many more were teamsters and mule wranglers; a couple in cloth, instead of leather jackets, and with bright neckcloths, looked as if they might be gamblers; another pair were rivermen who had tired of the Mississippi trade; and the remainder were the hopeful, restless, daring type that was pushing American civilization ever farther toward the Pacific.

Treasure or trade or just travel, it was all one to them, provided there was adventure and novelty.

Two half-breeds in the center of the enclosure were about to give an exhibition of how to pack a mule. Captain Becknell had ordered this for the benefit of the inexperienced members. He now came out of his tent to oversee the process. He addressed the taller of the man as "*cargador.*" The language of mule-packing was largely Spanish.

"There's no slicker pair of *arrieros* (packers) on the plains than these two," the leader of the expedition explained. "They can pack a *mula de carga* so slick he don't hardly know he's loaded, and do it in five minutes. Go it, *hombres!*"

Strewn about on the ground were small packets of cloth, utensils, and knick-knacks. These would make up the load of three hundred pounds, which was the most that a mule would carry. It must be evenly balanced, too. The mule knew as much about it as the men. If the burden was not properly adjusted, the animal would roll its eyes and grumble. If it was still dissatisfied, it would kick. Finally it would lie down and roll. There was no answer to that argument.

The *cargador* and his assistant now set to work. A square pad of raw sheepskin, rubbed and pounded to softness, and stuffed with hay, was first thrown across the broad back for a foundation. "That's the *salea*," Captain Becknell announced. "That's to prevent the critter's hide from chafing. Next, the *xerga*."

The saddlecloth was swiftly and neatly adjusted, the partners working with smooth skill, one on either side of the animal. The *cargador*, on the left, swung the heavy saddle into place and set it carefully.

"There goes the *aparejo*," the Captain said. "Watch 'em, boys, how they fix it. You can ruin a hundred dollars worth of mule by bad saddling."

Strong wide bandages of woven grass, passed in and out and over in an intricate pattern, bound the saddle into place. As the muscular *arrieros* hauled the cinch-bands taut, the mule set to grunting and groaning in protest.

"Ouch!" exclaimed the voice of a sympathetic onlooker.

The *cargador* looked up with a twinkle. "Don't you never believe a word a mule says," he said.

The Captain bore him out. "That mule ain't sufferin' none. But he would, if the *aparejo* wasn't cinched up good and tight. A couple of hours out on the trail, and it would fetch loose and start to rub, and the poor critter's back would be raw meat. He don't know what's good for him, that's all."

The cargo bags were now slung across the sturdy back. The two workers proceeded to fill them with such regularity of movement that they seemed like pieces of twin mechanism. The weight was kept as near even as possible.

Presently the animal showed signs of restiveness. The *cargador* spoke soothingly to him, but he began to jig on his feet. The man looked around and spoke a single sharp word:

"*Tapajos!*"

From the crowd a leather strap was handed to him. He slipped it upon the mule's head, covering the nervously rolling eyes. Immediately the mule became perfectly quiet.

"Remember that, boys," the Captain instructed the attentive circle. "Blindfold a mule, and he'll stand like a lamb."

The work of loading was now completed. Picking up a long rope, the *cargador*, with the help of the other *arriero*, took several swift, accurate turns about the pack and beneath the animal's belly. At the end he set his knee in the ribs for a purchase and gave a final mighty heave, to which the mule responded with a plaintive gurgle. The load was now safely set. A deft turn of the end knotted it in place. The helper whisked away the *tapajos*, and the mule turned his head to look over his load.

"*Adios!*" the *cargador* cried. This was a preliminary signal to the man opposite.

"*Vaya!*" the assistant responded, indicating that all was in order on his side.

"*Anda!*" the *cargador* snapped, and gave the mule a friendly whack over the rump.

The animal trotted contentedly off. The lesson was over.

TRAPPER JIM and half of the others went into town to make their final purchases. Franklin was a flourishing settlement of perhaps five hundred inhabitants crowded into a little more than one hundred single-story log cabins. There were a dozen stores, four taverns, a jail and a post office. Slow oxcarts brought in goods from the East. Flatboats, carrying merchandise, worked their way one hundred and fifty miles up-current from the metropolis of St. Louis, with its population of nearly five thousand. Much of this trade would be transferred to the pack-trains. For Franklin was then the outpost of trade. Four years later it was nothing. The river had undermined it and swept it away.

On the way back, Trapper Jim passed the town marshal. Reining in his mustang, the official shouted a farewell.

"If you find Cibola, bring me back a set of gold buttons for my pants!" he called, and laughed.

Chapter Five

DAYBREAK was the signal for camp-break. This was a sort of game, a rivalry as to which pair of travelers should be ready first. The members worked in pairs, both with pack-mule and wagon. Several old-timers among the number set the pace. As soon as the few cooking utensils were packed and the fires scattered by the *madre* (Spanish for mother, the trail-name for the cook), the trail captain took charge. Ewing Young had been elected to that office the night before. Satisfying himself that all was in order, he lifted his arm.

"Ready?"

The men stood alert. "Ready." "Ready." "All ready." The answers came back from all sides.

Down came the arm. "Catch up!" the captain shouted.

This was the signal for a race. Every wagon crew, every pack outfit, strove for the honor of being first prepared for the trail. Packs were cinched down tight. Wagon loads were settled in. Horses took their places at the wagon-tongue. Presently there came a triumphant call.

"All set!"

A brisk pair had finished in the lead.

"Take your place forward."

The winning pair led their mule to the head of the line.

Now the call was repeated from all sides: "All set, here!" "All set!" "All set!" as the line formed.

The captain took in the whole set-up with a keen eye and gave the signal.

"Fall in."

The wagons settled into order, two by two. The mules and spare horses stepped to their marching positions.

"Stretch out!" ordered the captain.

"Hep!" the muleteers snapped. "Gid-dap!" the wagoners commanded.

"Hold your line," Ewing Young directed.

They straggled irregularly out on the prairie. Now that the competition was over, the men went slack. From his saddle, Captain Becknell looked them over with a critical eye. He hummed a line from an old song, "The Raggle-taggle Gyps-eye-O!"

Riding beside him, Harmon Gregg grinned. "Don't think much of your outfit, eh?"

"Too early to tell," the leader said. A voice was raised in song:

"We're on our way
To Santa Fe."

The musical muleteer interrupted himself to shout a question across to Becknell: "How far you reckon it is, Cap?"

"A thousand miles, might be," the leader answered.

"Short of it, if anything," Ewing Young amended.

"My mule can do that on his hind-legs," the man boasted.

"How long are you figuring for the trip?" Gregg asked.

"Tell you better in a week. No wagon's ever tried it before."

"Three-four months?" the other persisted.

"If the luck is with us," was the best that the questioner could get out of him.

The organization was loosely military. At the same meeting of all members which picked Ewing Young as trail captain, Joseph R. Walker was elected camp captain. These two would divide the command and the responsibilities of the march. Walker had had wide experience in the field. He knew where the water was good, where it was too salty to drink, and where it was so mineralized as to be dangerous. Private maps of his own making told where there was soft wood for fires and hardwood to mend broken axles or split wheel-spokes. He was familiar with the richest grazing grounds. If he passed up some likely-looking camp site, it was because of the mosquitoes or buffalo gnats which would have tortured man and beast. A night's sleep is a necessity on the trail.

As soon as camp was pitched, the life and comfort of every creature became Walker's responsibility. He oversaw the turning out of the animals to graze. If he thought it necessary to guard the camp at night, he could place sentries. He inspected animals for lameness or disease, and wagons for damage. His was a hard life from sunset to sunrise. The rest of the time he could crawl into a wagon and go to sleep.

Where the camp-master left off, the trail-master took over. It was his responsibility to select the easiest route for travel. He was accountable for the safety of the caravan on the march. He sent out scouts to watch for Indians and game. If a river was to be crossed, he would decide upon the safest ford and make sure that there were no quicksands to swallow up animals and wagons. This was not

easy, for often the stream-bottoms shifted, and a crossing which had been reliable one week might be treacherous the next.

A good trail captain possessed an instinctive sense of the lay of the land. Ewing Young was a good trail captain. Like Walker, he was a hunter and trapper of experience. The two men worked well together.

The long rifles poured lead into the Pawnees. It was their first experience of gunfire.

How far their authority would extend depended largely upon their character. Every member of the *atajo* when he signed on in the expedition book, had agreed to obey the orders of the duly elected officers. But they were likely to look upon this as a formality. Except in time of emergency, such as attack by Indians, every man would tend to assume that he was his own boss. They might or might not take orders from the captains.

Back of the two was the power and reputation of Captain William Becknell. He had not been elected to any office. But it was understood that his was the final authority in a crisis. It was also understood, by those who knew him, that he would never interfere with his lieutenants unless absolutely necessary.

"Don't come to me with anything you can handle yourselves," he warned them.

The second night out, there was a minor test. They were making only fair time, considering that the course was all flat, easy country, and had come in late to a favorable camping spot called the Glen. Here, after sniffing at the air and testing the wind with wet forefinger, Walker blew his whistle for attention and gave an unpopular order:

"Spades and shovels!"

This meant that all packs must be got under cover, and drainage ditches dug to carry off surface water. Objections were raised at once.

"Who says it's goin' to rain?" "Look at them stars, shinin' bright." "Wind's in a clear quarter." "I'll take a chance."

Trapper Jim, Pete, the *madre*, and several others got out tools and did their ditching. The rest turned in. The camp-master did not press his order. It was too soon to risk a mutiny; let them learn by experience.

Early next morning the wind shifted, the clouds gathered, and there was a violent downpour. Too late, the rebellious members staggered out and did what they could to protect their merchandise. Several of the packs were soaked. The owners were obliged to unpack and spread the cloth in the sun. It was a mean job, and delayed the whole caravan.

There was an uncertain moment. Then Trapper Jim urged his horses forward into the black current.

Harmon Gregg reported to the camp-master what he had overheard one of the luckless mule-men say to his fellow:

"I reckon that Walker *hombre's* got more in his *cabeza* than we thought."

It was the first lesson, but it was not enough.

Chapter Six

AFTER that, it was all easy going for a week. As the process of making and breaking camp became more familiar, the *atajo* was able to make good time. Fifteen, seventeen, even twenty miles a day was not too much over the pleasant grassy flats. The greenhorns thought it was going to be like that all the way. They were living well on wild turkey, wild pigeon and antelope meat, and liking it. Most of the streams harbored fish. Life was pleasant, and they fell readily into the simple routine of camp, insensibly slacking up as pleasant day followed pleasant day.

The animals did not share the slackness. After the third day out, every mule knew his proper place in line. At the word of command, they fell in like soldiers. Any animal who attempted to crowd in was admonished by a swift kick in the ribs to stay where he belonged. Captain Becknell observed somewhat grimly:

"The critters have got more gumption than the men."

They had been out ten days when, one bright morning, everything started wrong. Two pack animals got into a quarrel over position, and a wrangler was severely bitten trying to pacify them. When they were quieted, the bell-mare could not be found. The mules would not move without her. She was their leader. Mules are that way; some say because they remember their mare mothers. The annoyed Ewing Young found the mare cooling her feet in a pool and looking at the scenery. When she was led back, one mule decided to lie down and roll, dislocating his pack. The load had to be taken off and repacked, to the exasperation of the two muleteers.

A valuable hour was wasted before they took the trail. Just as the call for noon stop was sounded, a wheel on Trapper Jim's wagon sprung. An extra half-hour was lost while that was being repaired. At a small creek crossing they were set upon by a cloud of green deer-flies which drew blood at every assault. Everyone was out of temper by mid-afternoon when the sky clouded, and a drizzle set in. The trail captain looked up Leader Becknell.

"If we don't make Rock Creek, we'll be in trouble."

"Make it, then," Captain Becknell said.

"We can't get there before sundown."

Becknell nodded. "Then we'll get there after. Shake 'em up a bit."

The men responded with ill humor to the speed-up. Lanterns were out before the ripples of the swelling stream warned them. The tired men and animals began to spread.

"Hold your ranks," the trail captain called sharply.

Mutterings and protests rose. "Ain't we going to camp?" "What about grub?" "I'm clean tuckered, and my livestock is worse."

"We've got to cross that water now," Ewing Young said positively.

"Why?" The question came from several quarters in tones ranging from challenge to plaintiveness.

"It'll be worse in the morning," Young said.

"And we'd have to do it cold-collar then," a wagoner backed him up. He meant that a draft-animal starts in the morning with an effort, and works up to the strain. Not until it gets "hot under the collar," can it meet a severe test.

"That's right," the *madre* said. "Never stop the night on the near side of rising water."

A former ox-team driver from the East said sulkily: "I call for a vote."

"Vote on the other side," the trail captain said. "Come on, boys."

"He's got a right to a vote," one of the flashily dressed gamblers put in.

"Anybody's got a right to a vote," Young conceded, "but this isn't the time for it."

"My wagon stops here," the ox-man declared. Several voices supported him. "No vote, no move." "The critters is wore out." "I don't go where I can't see." "Wait till morning."

Captain Becknell advanced to the front. He held a lantern high. "There'll be no vote," he said. "This *atajo* crosses. Follow me."

There was an uncertain moment. Then Trapper Jim urged his horses forward into the black current.

Two of the three other wagons followed. A handful of those who had raised rebellious voices unhitched.

With Captain Becknell, Young and Walker guiding, the train stumbled and splashed across without mishap.

In the morning the trail leader's foresight was proved. Swollen with all-night rains, the stream had become a foaming torrent.

On the far bank one of the mutineers was gesticulating and shouting. "Captain Becknell, Captain Becknell, what'll we do? What'll we *do*?"

The leader glanced at the seething flood. No wagon could live in it for ten seconds. He cupped his hands at his mouth and shouted back:

"Go home and paint your nose blue!"

Ewing Young said to Gregg:

"There'll be trouble before we get some of these colts broke in."

Chapter Seven

THE pace slowed down. What was the hurry, men asked themselves. It was pleasant enough making ten or twelve miles a day across the richly grassed plains, with two hours at noon to rest the men and feed the animals. It was less pleasant crossing the many watercourses which cut through the land. Some were easy to ford. Others might cost weary miles of detour. Often the banks were steep and treacherous. At Stranger Creek a sudden landslide, started by a struggling mule, overwhelmed a pack-horse below. Before they could dig him out of the rubble, he was dead.

On the tenth day out, they came to a rough signboard on the brink of a small stream. It was at a fork of the trail and pointed northwest. Any evidence that humans had traveled that way before was a matter of lively interest. The travelers gathered around to read.

OREGON
TRAIL

"That's a small signpost for a big country," Harmon Gregg remarked.

"It's the biggest country in the world, I reckon," Trapper Jim said.

"Ever been up there?" one of the rivermen asked.

Jim nodded. "I've had all of it that I want."

"Is it tougher than this?" one of the new men asked.

The trapper stared at him. "This? Call this hard? Why, it's as safe as your granny's kitchen, beside that north country! Half the men that go in up there never come out."

A discontented voice said: "We ain't out yet. I don't believe the Old Man knows where he is right now. Always studyin' over them old maps of his."

"Why don't you ask him?" Gregg suggested.

"You reckon he'd tell me?"

"Well," said Gregg with a judicious air, "he might. And then again, he mightn't. But if I was going to ask sassy questions of the boss, I'd put a brick in the seat of my pants first."

"We got a right to know where we're going, ain't we?" a mule-man said.

"Council Grove," Ewing Young volunteered.

"Where's that?"

"At the plumb end of nowhere," the trail-master replied with a grin.

"Well, I don't like it, and I wish I had my ten dollars back," one of the rivermen declared, and there were mutterings of assent.

Gregg reported the spirit of possible mischief to his chief.

"Let 'em chatter," Captain Becknell said. "It'll ease their tempers."

For some time he had sensed that the lesson of discipline, instilled by the experience at the ford, was draining out of their minds. When they should reach "bad" country, the members would have to live up to their promises and obey orders without question. He was an experienced and patient man, dealing with inexperienced and impatient men. He would bide his time.

Two days of steady rain lowered the spirits of the travelers. At One-Hundred-and-Ten Mile Creek they lost a day waiting for the water to go down, and nearly lost a wagon because the driver did not want to wait. At a smaller, nameless rivulet, another wagon stuck in the mud so firmly that it took half the mules in camp to haul it out. The men continued to mutter that it was a fool trick to try wheeled traffic in that country, anyway.

"You haven't seen anything yet," Harmon Gregg, the old trail hand, told them grimly. "Wait till we hit the mountains."

The trail was still in rich and fairly level country. There would always be water, wood and forage for the animals. But there were places where the short cuts across country, which would save many miles, were blind. Rain had washed out the hoof-marks of the few previous expeditions. The trail-master here must find his own way.

Scouting ahead of the slow-moving train soon after the morning start, one of the hunters noticed a forked stick planted in the ground. In the fork was wedged a small square of paper, protected from the weather by a fold of bark. There was no writing on the paper—only a crude picture of a human form, and below it a rough design of uncertain outline. He galloped in, and the experts gathered around to interpret it.

"It's a message from some trapper who doesn't know how to write," Ewing Young said.

Harmon Gregg studied the bark. "Hasn't been here more than two-three days," he said.

Captain Becknell glanced at the human figure. "Indians around. He's telling us."

"Friendly Indians," Joe Walker said, pointing to the penciled outline.

"How d'you figger that?" a muleteer asked.

"That's a pipe he's drawn. If they'd been hostile, he'd have drawn an arrow," the plainsman replied.

"Anyway, we'll keep a watch out," the trail captain decided.

He sent out four riders with instructions not to stray more than a mile or two from the caravan. Toward sunset a shot was heard, and a youth who went by the name of Ohio Slim came galloping in.

"Injuns! Injuns!" he shouted. "They're on the warpath."

"Where and how many?" Ewing Young inquired coolly.

"Out there," the scared youngster babbled excitedly. "Hundreds of 'em. They've got their squaws and papooses with 'em."

"Then they're not on the warpath," the trail captain said. "Calm down. Indians never take their families into a fight. We'll look."

Captain Becknell joined him, and the two disappeared across a rise. From its top they sighted a band of perhaps two dozen Osages. Their leadman, riding out, made the sign of peace, to which the white leader responded. The two men met on a grassy hillock and dismounted. They exchanged remarks in the two-handed sign language, to this general effect.

"We wish to trade with the white men,"—from the Indian.

"We have goods to trade with you,"—from the white man.

The Osage drew out a pipe. The caravan leader produced his pipe. Tobacco was exchanged. A squaw brought fire in an earthenware bowl. Both men squatted on the ground and lighted up. Drawing in a draft that swelled his scrawny cheeks, the Osage breathed a cloud downward. Captain Becknell followed suit. One puff for earth. Indian and white man now pointed their noses heavenward and *whoofed* their mouthfuls of smoke into the air. One puff for the skies. Twice more they sucked in and vigorously discharged the blasts of vapor, east and west. One puff each for air and water. The ceremonial was over. They were ready to trade.

The whole band headed for the train, which had halted. Captain Becknell shouted a warning in English which the savages did not understand.

"Watch out for 'em. They'll steal the shine off a brass button."

The braves and the squaws circulated among the whites. The braves wanted powder and tobacco. The women begged for beads and trinkets. But they had little to offer in return. Their beaver furs were thin. The buffalo robes were ill-cured and mangy. When they found that they could do no more business with the palefaces, they tried to pick up odd objects, only to be cracked over the knuckles by the watchful whites. They took it in good part. It was a sort of game with them. There was nothing wrong in stealing if you could get away with it. If you were caught, you made no fuss, but hoped for better luck next time. That was the Indian code of morals.

Two days later the *atajo* met with another band. This was a smaller group, traveling eastward and making good time. No women or children were with them, but they too wished to trade, not to fight. They knew one white man's word. It was "swap." They looked greedily at the wagons and repeated in hybrid Spanish and Yankee, "*Para* Swap. *Para* Swap."

Very well, the whites were willing. But what did the Indians have? Pete, the *madre*, acting as interpreter, made the animal sign. Did they have furs? No! No furs. Gold, then? No gold. Turquoises? Shiny stones, meaning desert "emeralds"? It was not likely that the tribes this far East would have any of these valuables. Still, it was always worth trying. But no, the Indians had nothing.

They did produce some trail food: dried pumpkin, maize, beans. Becknell's men, who were traveling light in the matter of food, were glad to get the food. Some cases were opened up, and the trade proceeded satisfactorily for both sides—cheap cotton goods and bright buttons for the supplies. When there was no more business to be done, the little band melted away without a word. Indians never said good-by. They just left.

As they vanished over a distant rise, one of the whites had a belated idea.

"Why didn't we ask 'em if they saw any buffalo?"

Joe Walker grinned. "Save your wind. They'd never tell you if they did."

Chapter Eight

Always alert for signs and indications, Joe Walker, the camp captain, addressed his companions at breakfast.

"Anybody hear those coyotes last night?"

A mule-man said, "Sounded hungry."

"That wasn't the hunger-cry," the experienced camp-master said. "They were feeding."

"What on?" Ewing Young asked.

"Might be dead buffalo."

"Where there's dead buffalo, there's live buffalo," Captain Becknell said.

Pete, the cook, smacked his lips loudly. "I'd admire to have prairie beef for dinner," he said.

"Suppose you ride wide tomorrow, Jim," the trail captain addressed Robertson. "We could lay off for a day's hunting."

Their course was now slanting southwest toward Council Grove. They were in buffalo country, the heavy rich grass of the prairies, but saw no sign of the huge animals. Toward the middle of the afternoon, a trapper who had been scouting forward appeared on the crest of a distant ridge. His bronco was galloping at full speed. The rider was flailing his arms and yelling. When he came within earshot, they could make out the words:

"Buffalo! Buffalo! They're after me."

The wagons drew close together. Soon there loomed against the horizon the dark line of massed bodies. Heads down, the creatures were plunging blindly ahead. It was a stampede.

The frightened rider drew in his horse back of the nearest wagon. He begged the men to get out their guns and check the charging bison while there was time. Captain Becknell tried to calm him down.

"Don't fluster yourself," he advised. "They'll never overrun the wagons."

Sure enough, the herd swerved sharply to the right and thundered on. Instantly the men of the *atajo* got their guns out, spurred their horses and mules to the chase, and shot down the helpless prey point blank. There was no resistance. It was sheer slaughter. Bulls, cows and calves, a score of them, lay bleeding on the ground. It was the custom of the day, which was to continue through the years until the species was killed out, all but a few now cared for in semi-captivity.

Trapper Jim, riding in, looked about at the dead, dying and wounded creatures in disgust.

"Now you've killed 'em, what are you going to do with 'em?" he asked one of the hunters who was going from body to body, cutting out the tongues.

"Eat 'em," the man said, with a grin.

"This whole *atajo* couldn't eat one buffalo," the trapper retorted. "Better save powder and ball for the time when you may need 'em."

"Prairie beef" was good eating. The big hump supplied rich, suety meat. The bones, cracked open, yielded a marrow which was prepared as "prairie butter." Ribs and loin were preferred by many plainsmen to the best elk, antelope or deer venison. There was a mighty feast that evening when the halt for camp was called. There was also unwelcome news.

"Form corral for the night," Camp Captain Walker ordered.

This meant added work. The wagons would be drawn up in a hollow square. All draft animals would be hobbled before being turned out to graze, foreleg closely bound to foreleg with stout straps. This prevented their wandering far. In case of attack, they would be hustled inside the enclosure, where they could not be run off by marauding savages.

The overfed and sleepy caravan men saw no occasion for all that trouble. Mutters of discontent were heard.

"What does Walker want to get so notional about Indians for?" somebody asked.

"No bad Indians east of Council Grove," another said. "Every fool knows that."

"I'm tired of being bossed around," a third said, and a companion backed him up with:

"Might as well be in the Army."

The camp-master turned on him. "Maybe you think those buffado were running for exercise," he said mildly.

"That was a stampede," Trapper Jim put in. "They were good and scared."

"What scairt 'em?" one of the objectors asked.

"Well, it wasn't no prairie dog," Pete, the cook, said. "It might be Injuns, or it might not."

"And they might be good Injuns or they might be bad," the trapper remarked.

"The sooner you get the corral shaped up, the quicker you'll get to sleep," the camp-master pointed out.

The weary men got the wagons into position and the animals outside. Rifles, flints, powder and bullets were made ready. Grumblingly the members performed their tasks and prepared to turn in, when they got a second and worse shock.

"We'll set guard tonight," the camp-master announced.

An immediate outcry arose. It was all foolishness. The camp dogs would give the alarm if anything stirred. The men wanted their sleep.

"Orders," Walker said curtly.

The night was to be divided into three watches; nine to twelve, twelve to three, three to six. The men could draw lots for it. Or they could play euchre or poker or seven-up. But however they decided it, four men must be constantly on post, one to each corner, a hundred yards out.

The idea of gambling for it pleased them. The winners escaped duty for the night. The second lot had first choice, and invariably took the early watch. To be routed out of warm blankets into the chill prairie air, part way through the night, was no man's choice. All grumbled. There was nothing unusual in that. Men on the trail always grumbled. It was their way of letting off steam.

But in the end they obeyed the order, however slackly.

Chapter Nine

Years of harsh training on the fur trails of the North had accustomed Trapper Jim Robertson to discipline. In the North, men had to hang together and give up personal independence for the good of the band, if they were to survive. He was ready at all times to back the chosen officers of the *atajo*. But he had his private opinion of the new measures. He spoke to Joe Walker aside.

"Is the Old Man really worried about Injuns?"

"Cap Becknell? No," the camp-master said.

"Then what's all the fadoodle about?"

"He wants to get the boys used to taking orders."

"It won't hurt 'em, I guess," the trapper said. "They've got plenty to learn."

After a few nights of the routine, Walker became suspicious that the sentries were not attending to business. His opportunity of reading them a lesson came when camp was pitched on the edge of a cottonwood grove. Sometime in the early morning the hollow square was invaded, and a twenty-five-pound sack of bacon stolen, together with a batch of the *madres* rocklike camp bread.

Trained in woodcraft, Walker was able to identify the thieves by certain marks: Two big bobcats had sneaked into camp and helped themselves. It put an idea into the shrewd head of the camp captain. He carefully erased all signs of the marauders. At the breakfast fire he called for attention.

"This camp was robbed last night."

There was a chorus of surprise and disbelief.

"Who was on the late watch?"

Four of the men spoke up. Each one was sure that no Indians could have sneaked past him. (Walker had said nothing about Indians, but this was what he wished them to believe.) The most voluble was young Ohio Slim.

"I never closed an eye, the whole three hours," Ohio Slim declared virtuously.

The day before he had been heard to remark that a fellow could get just as good sleep out on the pee-rary as he could in camp, if he knew how to

Sure enough, the herd swerved sharply to the right and thundered on.

fix things. Walker knew this, but he kept it to himself.

From then on, he had an eye out for the youth. The next night Slim had the midnight watch. His station was near a copse of black locust. He went to it whistling and trying to conceal the fact that he had wrapped a warm blanket around his body.

At two o'clock in the morning the moon had sunk below the horizon. A soft wind rustled the tall prairie grasses. From the thicket a dim figure stepped forth. It dropped to all fours, then went flat on its belly. Swiftly it snaked its way toward the sentry at that corner. The sentry did not notice it. The sentry did not notice anything. He was deep in the enjoyment of a refreshing nap.

The prowling figure rose and leaped.

Wild clamor broke out. Dogs barked. Rudely awakened sleepers shouted. Grazing animals snorted and plunged. Men seized their guns and ran out. In the half-light they saw a horrid figure. It looked human, but seemed to have no head. It stumbled around in little circles, uttering muffled yelps. The authoritative voice of Joe Walker called:

"Muzzles down! Don't shoot."

He seized the strange figure and propelled it toward the corral. From it came a string of muffled curses and threats..

"Lights," he ordered.

A lantern was brought. The captain whipped off the flour-bag which he had jammed down over his captive's head and shoulders, binding it with a lariat, and addressed him.

"What if I had been an Indian, Slim?"

The youth spit and spluttered like an enraged bobcat.

"You were asleep," the captain charged.

"I wasn't! . . . What if I was?"

"You're fined three dollars for endangering the safety of the whole camp."

The offender got off easy. The lesson begun by Captain Becknell at the flooded ford was being driven home.

Chapter Ten

SMALL alarms kept the travelers on the alert for a time. Two horsemen, sighted against the distant sky, would start a report of Indian war parties nearby. A sudden night panic among the animals, with no apparent cause, woke up the entire caravan to warlike activity. Every wagon bristled with guns. Rifles were fired at shadows. Nothing happened.

Riding as outpost one cloudy day, Ohio Slim hurried back with a report of something queer going on in a steep cleft between rocky hills near the river. He had seen a wisp of smoke and dimly heard strange noises. It must be a war-song, he thought, for who but redskins would be making music in that wilderness?

Trapper Jim volunteered to investigate. He saddled his trotting mule and rode out. Two hundred yards from the edge of the rocky defile he dismounted and let the reins fall over the animal's head, to the ground. The mule stood as if hitched to an invisible rail. Trail animals were trained to do that. Flattened in the grass, the investigator crept forward. He peered cautiously over the brink and at the sight below him, gave a chuckle of relief.

Two tattered figures were crouched before a feeble fire. A very small fish was spitted over the flame. One of them lifted it off, placed it on a flat rock for a dish, and divided it accurately with his knife. Both knelt and asked a blessing on the food. By this, the watcher above knew them to be missionaries. The "war-song" heard by the alarmed outpost was a Baptist hymn.

Waiting until they had finished their scanty meal, Trapper Jim hailed them and told them of the approaching wagon train. They were trail-wise and advised that the caravan leave the uplands and travel along the river bottom, where low water made the going easy. They had been out for six months, converting such Indians as they met, they said, and were now on their way to Council Grove. The trapper looked at them in astonishment.

"Where are your animals?" he asked.

"Grizzlies killed them. Back in the mountains."

"And you haven't any guns?"

"No," they said. If they traveled armed, the Indians would not believe in their good faith.

"Come back and see the boss," Trapper Jim invited.

He led them to Captain Becknell, who questioned them about the country upriver. They were pitifully thin. Their clothes were rags. Their boots hung to their feet only because they were crossbound like pack-saddles with cloth strips and twine. The knapsacks, in which they carried their supplies, were as thin as they were.

"What do you need?" Captain Becknell asked.

They looked at one another sorrowfully. "We haven't any trade," the larger one said. A dozen small otter skins make up their stock, but these were mangy and poor, the summer pelts of fur animals being almost worthless. If they could be exchanged for a shilling's worth of goods at the distant trading post, the owners would be lucky.

Captain Becknell would not even examine them. "I don't ask trade of God's men," he said. "Tell me what you need."

With some difficulty he argued the grateful missionaries into accepting a small quantity of the articles most sorely lacked. They took a little salt, a little sugar, a few strips of bacon, a bag of crackers, a spool of coarse packthread, and some oil for their cracked boots, and went on their way, leaving their thanks and blessing behind them.

"That ought to bring us good luck," the Captain said to the trail-master.

The encounter had an unexpected result. The unruly element among the men were restive under the Becknell system. There had been no trouble with the savages. They had seen hardly any, just a few bands too small to be dangerous. What was the use of all this fuss and bother about forming corral every night? They were good and tired of mounting guard and losing their sleep. There were no hostile tribes near. It was the same old argument, but backed up now by the case of the missionaries. If two unarmed men could travel for months in safety, didn't that prove the uselessness of keeping up such a strict guard?

The rebels got together and chose an ex-gambler as their spokesman. He was a slick-tongued fellow who had been on the stage and boasted that he was "a fast crab with my clacker." He politely requested a hearing from Captain Becknell. The leader invited Gregg, Walker and Ewing Young to sit in.

Faro Mike opened the talk. "We want a trail-vote."

"Who's 'we'?" Captain Becknell asked.

The gambler was ready for that. "Here's the list," he said. He held out a sheet of paper. Several of the signers had written their names. More were in Mike's own handwriting with the sign *His* (X) *mark* by those who could not write. Captain Becknell ran his eye carefully along the roster.

"Thirteen names," he said. "Might be bad luck," and he grinned.

"We want a vote," the spokesman said.

"You got a right to it," the leader admitted. "What on?"

"This night business."

"You want a loose camp?" Walker struck in. "All sprangled out where Indians can rush us one by one?"

"Well, no," the gambler said. "We're willing to make corral. But not all this sentry-go business."

"Call the meeting," Becknell told the camp-master.

Every man dropped what he was doing and gathered at the dying fire. Mike delivered a harangue. Captain Becknell might mean well, he said, but he was pushing things too far. Men couldn't ride hard all day and then sit up half the night on watch. It wasn't reasonable. The country was quiet. All the Indians they had seen were peaceful. Peaceful? They were plumb scared—no danger. And so on and so forth.

In reply Captain Becknell said briefly that some people never believed in danger until it was too late. For himself, he'd rather lose his sleep than his scalp. Those that felt different could vote as they felt.

Pete, the *madre*, addressed the orator: "You won't talk so bunkum when you wake up some morning with an arrow through your gizzard."

"Clam it!" the gambler retorted. "I wasn't born in the woods to be scared by an owl."

The vote was taken. Captain Becknell's party was outvoted by five ballots.

"All right," the leader said. "Those that don't want to stand guard, needn't. I'll take a post every night. Who's with me?"

The camp officials, including Pete, promptly volunteered, as did Robertson. Three of the hunters followed suit. So did Ohio Slim. He had had his lesson. It meant a hard and grilling test for the willing ones. Pete turned upon Faro Mike's supporters.

"Maybe you think I like ridin' herd on you," he said. "A bunch of doodlers and inglers and bounetters, that's what you are. Anybody want to fight on that? No! Well, sweet dreams."

Chapter Eleven

FOUR weeks of travel brought them in sight of Council Grove. The place was nothing much to look at; one trading post and a couple of log buildings. One was for animal occupancy, the other for human. The advantage, if any, was with the stable.

The *atajo* had come almost three hundred and fifty miles. All things considered, Capt. Becknell was fairly satisfied with their progress. A pack train would have made better time. But a pack train would have had fewer traffic problems to face. Hoofs could carry animals where wheels had difficulty with heavy loads.

Loss of time did not worry the leader. He was not specially interested in making a quick journey. He was out to prove that wagons could do what everybody said they could not do, reach Santa Fe. If they could, there would be a big volume of trade rolling southwest and he would be in on the quick profits.

Thus far the expedition had been, in a sense, within the borders of civilization. Civilization ended at Council Grove. This was the last permanent establishment of white men, the final trading-post. West of it a straight line of travel would bring them to the Great Bend of the Arkansas River. But it was always a question how straight a line could be made. Indians, washouts, prairie fires or unknown emergencies might compel troublesome detours.

ONCE they had reached the Arkansas, the rest was simple. They could follow its course up into the mountains and turn south through the high passes into Mexican territory. No trouble about that. The stream marked the trail for those who had gone before. Captain Becknell had another idea, but he was keeping it to himself until later.

West of Council Grove stretched the wilderness. Upon entering it, they would be wholly on their own. There would be no supplies, no directions, no help in case of trouble. They would live off the country or die.

Living off the country had been easy, so far. Small game was plentiful. They could generally shoot elk or antelope for fresh meat. The larger watercourses abounded in fish. For a special treat, the hunters often trailed down the prairie bees and came back with the prize of spicy sage-honey and a number of stings for mementos. Now and again they had met with Indians who were very ready to trade dried pumpkin, maize, and beans for cloth or beads.

The members were now well trail-hardened. But the fat living had inclined the less experienced to take a light view of the necessary discipline. So far, it had been a picnic, with one or two disagreeable episodes. They took the cheerful and foolish view that everything would continue to be lovely. Why worry? And why sweat themselves thin with useless routine?

The sharp lesson given to the sleepy Ohio Slim dimmed in their minds. They grumbled and they shirked. There was no open mutiny—but the expedition was not being properly run. The leaders knew it. Walker, Ewing Young and Gregg consulted

with Captain Becknell in the evening camp outside of Council Grove. After supper all members were summoned to a meeting. The leader sat on the high seat of his wagon, puffing at a blackened pipe. He removed it from his lips and spoke.

"You fellows have had it pretty soft so far."

"Not so soft," somebody objected.

"It's going to be tougher from now on."

"Why?" a hunter asked.

"Indians," the Captain said, and resumed his smoking.

A GENERAL discussion of the Indian situation followed. So far, the redskins they met had been peaceable enough. Peaceable? They'd been plumb scared. What reason was there to think that the savages farther on would be any more troublesome? There weren't any tribes on the warpath. The general opinion was expressed by a youthful teamster who said scornfully, "Who's afraid?" Set him up with a good smooth-bore gun, a handful of powder, and a bullet between his teeth, and he'd stand off any ten Pawnees or Shawnees or Sawkeys or Comanches.

"Who's afraid?" he repeated.

"I am," Captain Becknell said quietly.

"Aw, let 'em come!" a bearded trapper said. "We can get ready for 'em when we see 'em."

The *madre* spoke up. "And they'll have your scalp while you're gettin' ready. Them fellers don't send notice in advance."

"That's it," Captain Becknell said. "Pete is right." He nodded toward the cook. "You young greenies think Injun fighting is a joke. You want to have it easy. You want to get your night's sleep. And you'd be surprised to wake up with an arrow through your belly. Wouldn't you?"

The complainers looked at one another uneasily. Nobody replied.

The Captain stood up and knocked out his pipe against the side of the seat.

"No, boys," he said forcefully. "From now on this camp is going to be run by rule-and-rote. You'll form the wagons. You'll hobble the critters. You'll take 'em out to feed and fetch 'em in to march. You'll stand sentry-go. You'll dig trench when it rains, and you'll douse fires when it's clear. Hard work? Of course it's hard work. What did you expect when you signed up? This *atajo* is no place for pinky-fingers and lilypukes. Them as can't go it, can quit here and now and have their money back. Any remarks?"

An uneasy foot-shuffling silence followed.

"All right," Captain Becknell said briskly. "Final stock-up tomorrow at the trading post. Inspection at sundown. We hit the trail at sunrise. Santa Fe or bust! Good night."

The store did a rush of trade the next day. For the journey each man must have fifty pounds of flour, fifty of bacon, ten of coffee, and a sufficient supply of sugar and salt. A large tin cup and his skinning knife made up his table utensils. He carried a gun; usually a long-barreled rifle, though a few preferred "scatterguns," as shotguns were called. To serve his weapon, the hunter had one hundred flints, twenty-five pounds of black powder, one hundred pounds of lead, and a bullet mold to cast the lead into bullets.

To prepare his weapon for action, the gunner poured in the powder, rammed the bullet, wadded with cloth or coarse paper, down the muzzle, sprinkled a few grains of powder on the firing pan, set his flint above the pan, cocked the hammer of his gun and let go. The hammer hit the flint and struck out sparks. The sparks ignited the powder flecks in the pan. The fire was communicated to the charge in the barrel. With a mighty bang and a fearful kick, the bullet sped on its deadly errand. At least, that was the theory.

The fact was often different. Half the time the charge failed to explode the first time. Then, if the object at the other end of the barrel was a bear or an Indian, the man with the gun had better drop it and take to his heels.

Trappers carried half-a-dozen steel beaver traps with chain, weighing six pounds each. Every member of an expedition had, swinging at his belt, the large "possible sack," filled with everything possible to cram into it: thread, needles, leather and cloth patches, tobacco, small tools, and even, for the delicate, toothbrushes and combs.

FOR all these items the trader at Council Grove charged exorbitant prices. The men paid. They had to have them, to pass Captain Becknell's final inspection. At the close of the day's business the storekeeper took Gregg and Ewing Young aside.

"Got the newest thing in trade here," he said, with a wink.

"No go," Gregg replied. "The Captain don't believe in the whisky trade with Indians."

"Neither do I," the trader said. "It drives 'em crazy, and they go on the warpath, and then there's killings. This isn't firewater. It's music." He brought out a box full of jew's-harps.

Young stared. "I've met a heap of Indians," he said, "but I never yet saw one that was musical."

"So they ain't," the trader agreed. "But they're crazy after this contraption. It tickles their teeth. Dollar apiece."

The two men cautiously invested five dollars each. Later they regretted their caution. They sold their first tooth-tickler to a Sawkey chief for the equivalent of five dollars. The last one, several weeks later, went to a Comanche warrior for a three-ounce white-gold nugget worth over fifty dollars.

Chapter Twelve

TRAVEL between the river-bottoms was easy and pleasant. From the depths of Ewing Young's possible sack, he brought up fishhooks and a line. The fish were willing. One day a twenty-five-pound blue cat was caught. The travelers picked its bones. Daily the hunters brought in prairie chicken, wild turkey and quail. The men ate everything and called for more. Pete, the *madre*, wore himself thin over his spits and kettles. He declared that it was the "most bulimious outfit ever a man cooked for," *bulimy* being trail-talk for a ravenous appetite.

The softer the caravan lived, the laxer it became. Several of the volunteer watchers went back on their offer. This threw more work on the faithful. The little band of Becknell supporters grew gaunt and nerve-racked with weariness. It was only a question of time when the strain would be too much for their iron endurance.

After a few days' journey, the river narrowed. A wagon which attempted the passage around the shoulder of a cliff became mired in quicksand and was hauled back with difficulty. The trail-master ordered the caravan to cut across prairie. Hardly had the outriders spread out when one came hurrying back with a report of a large band of Indians in war formation to the northwest. The band approached. Trapper Jim, whose eyesight was the keenest in the outfit, after prolonged observation between his cupped hands, burst into hoarse laughter. The "Indians," he reported, were wearing horns. In fact, they were a herd of elk. The men spent a lively day hunting them, and killed two.

Illogically, this convinced the anti-Becknell party that there was nothing to be feared in a country where Indians turned out to be elk.

Two days later, the young Ohioan came to Captain Becknell.

"Captain, I been out on sentry six nights running."

"So have the rest of us, young fellow."

"Last night I went to sleep standing up, and fell over."

"Tell the *madre* to give you an extra pail of strong coffee."

"I'm scairt I can't keep awake even with that."

"All right," the leader said patiently. "I'll divide up your watch tonight with Young."

The exhausted youth refused that. But he was nearly at the end of his rope. The other watchers were in no better shape. The relief came none too soon.

It was on a hot June afternoon when they sighted a dark hump ahead of them. It proved to be a dead buffalo bull. The hunters reported that he was very old, and had probably been abandoned by the herd to die of old age. Ewing Young was not satisfied. Anything might have important meaning on the trail. He made a careful investigation and came back with a sober face to speak privately with Captain Becknell.

"That buffalo's got a bullet hole in his neck, and a broken arrow between his ribs."

The stocky leader rubbed his head. "That's bad," he said. "Redskins and white men hunting on the same range."

The trail-master nodded. "Yes, that might mean trouble."

"What was the arrow?"

"Looked like an Arapahoe."

"How long has the bull been dead?"

"Not more than a day."

The leader reflected. "We'll close up the formation," he decided. "But don't say anything to the men."

That evening's camp was pitched near a small grove of aspens. At sundown the wind shifted. Trapper Jim Robertson, who had been rubbing oil into his high boots to keep them soft and comfortable, lifted his head. His nose wriggled sensitively. He went over to speak a word in Captain Becknell's ear. The leader got his long rifle and looked to the priming. Trapper Jim returned to the wagon and got his out and loaded it. He wet his forefinger with his lips and held it up to the wind. The two men left camp, making a wide swing to the left.

They approached the small woodland cautiously and edged in among the trees. Soon they were in sight of the abandoned Indian camp.

It was a small one, as was shown by the size of the fire, now dead. Beside it was an object which had once been human. It was a bearded head impaled on a stake. The beard proved that the victim was a white man. The scalp had been cut away. Several arrows transfixed the neck. Silently the two completed their investigation and turned away.

Back in camp, Captain Becknell's voice roused those who had already gone to sleep and startled the others by its tone.

"I want every man who voted against standing guard to follow me."

They gathered and straggled out. This time the leader took a straight line. He beckoned his followers into the dusk of the woodpatch. When they were all there, he lifted the stake with its grisly burden.

"Take a look," he said grimly, "and see what a nice, safe country we're in now."

He led the way back. Nobody spoke until they reached the wagons. Then the leader lifted his voice again.

"You've seen what you've seen. What do you think of it?"

Silence.

"Don't like it, eh? You thought you knew more than I do about the trail. What do you think now?"

An uneasy shuffling of feet was the only response.

From that time on, the camp ran like clockwork.

Chapter Thirteen

THIS time it was nobody's fault. Even hard-bitten Captain Becknell had to admit that. Four of his best men were on outpost, Trapper Jim, Wolfskill, Pete, and Ohio Slim who had learned his lesson.

"And cheap at three dollars," he admitted.

They had warning, too. That noon, when they had stopped for their two-hour rest, near a dry streambed, the leader had given special instructions to the cook. No hardwood was to be used for the dinner fire; nothing but dry aspen. Aspen burns clear and gives off no smoke. Across that gently rolling prairie, smoke would be visible for a long distance.

"Injuns, boss?" Pete asked his leader.

"Might be," was the cautious answer.

"You ain't seen any?"

"No."

"But you think there's some around?"

"Might be," Captain Becknell repeated.

"It's my opinion," Pete confided to Trapper Jim, "that the boss can smell an Injun ten miles downwind."

The alarm came in the first watch. Camp had been pitched in the open prairie. At this spot the soil was poor and the grass short and dry. The stock spread far afield to get sufficient fodder.

A dull thunder broke the silence of the night. Wolfskill, on sentry, caught it first.

"Buffalo!" he shouted. "Bearing this way."

Buffalo herds do not stampede at night unless driven by some alarm. The vigilant Joe Walker yelled a warning.

"Indians! Rifles out."

The aroused campers tumbled out, fumbling for their weapons. But the charging herd at the last moment swerved in a long sweep. The maneuver was known to Captain Becknell.

"They're running off the stock," he shouted.

The scared horses and mules were caught up in the stampede and scattered. Some, in their terror, burst their hobbles. Evidence was found afterward that other hobbles had been cleanly cut.

The whole camp turned out in pursuit, leaving the wagons unguarded. This was what the Indians had hoped and planned. They were not after the horses. They wanted loot. There was plenty of it in the wagons. When the exhausted campers returned at dawn, with three horses and two mules still missing, they had another and more dismal surprise.

Their belongings were strewn about the ground. The packs had been hastily rifled. Worse than all, their spare weapons were gone. Nobody had so much as seen an Indian.

Captain Becknell shook his fists at the sky and cursed himself for a fool. Tricked like a greenhorn by a bunch of thieving Osages!

"How do you know they're Osages?" Wolfskill asked curiously.

"Pawnees or Comanches would have attacked," the leader said. "Osages don't fight; they steal."

Young Ohio Slim bristled up. "Aren't we going after 'em?"

"Where?" said Captain Becknell heavily.

Where, indeed? The raiders had left neither trace nor trail.

As the camp was belatedly breaking, a horseman appeared, making elaborate peace signs. Chateau, the chieftain of a band camped a few miles away, wished to pow-wow with the white Captain. Would the white Captain come to the chief's camp?

The white Captain would not. If the Indian chief wanted to pow-wow, they would meet in the open.

It was so arranged. Chateau explained politely that it was all a mistake. His warriors did have some of the white men's guns, but arrangements could be made for their quick return.

"Warriors!" the Captain said. "Thieves!"

"*Para* swap," the Osage blandly suggested in the hybrid mixture of Spanish and Yankee.

"*Para* swap!" repeated the embittered leader. "You steal our guns and then you want us to swap for 'em. What'll you take?"

It appeared that the looters had been scared off before they had obtained all that they had hoped for. Their squaws needed beads. The warriors would be glad to have some mirrors and some of the funny things that gave thrills to teeth. Para swap?

There was nothing else for it. The caravan had to have its arms back. The deal went through. A jubilant band of Osages took jaunty leave of a disgruntled bunch of whites.

Chapter Fourteen

HALF way!

The train of men, mules, and horses halted on a high bank overlooking the Great Bend of the Arkansas. Far below the stream ran, broad and bright and swift. It was the biggest water they had seen since leaving Missouri six weeks before.

Groves of tall trees gave a grateful shade. There was rich grass for the stock. Looking down on the plain, they could see deer and antelope. It was a pleasant country.

Thanks to the careful leadership of Captain Becknell, the caravan was in good condition. A loss of ten or fifteen animals would not have been unusual. They had lost but five; the horse that had been buried in the landslide, another which had been swept away in a freshet, and three mules. One of these had been bitten by a rattlesnake and disabled. Another had been run down and eaten by wolves. The third had broken its hobbles and trotted away at night to join a herd of buffalo where it may have been welcome. Anyway, it never came back.

There had been some delays caused by breakage on the wagons. That was to be expected. But there were skilled repairmen in the outfit. No wagon had had to be abandoned.

The men were hardy and in good spirits. When the trail-master announced that the journey was half over and they would take a day's layoff, there was much good cheer. Two members went out with scatterguns and brought in a generous supply of game birds. Anglers had no difficulty in catching a variety of fish. Pete, the cook, aroused high enthusiasm by announcing that he had trailed a foraging bear to a berry patch, chased the animal away (he didn't *think* it was a grizzly, he said, but it might have been) and gathered enough berries for a fresh fruit pie all around. Some men in the *atajo* hadn't tasted pie in a year.

Boats would have been convenient now. But it would take too long to build craft large enough to float the wagons and the stock. Rafts could be thrown together quickly. But the two rivermen, after studying the current, advised against trying to raft against it. It was too swift.

The expedition skirted the north bank for five days. At noon of the sixth they came upon a reach where the water rippled over bright, pebbly shallows. The leader got out his home-drawn map and examined it.

"They say there's only two safe fords on this whole river," he said to his companions who crowded around to look at the map.

"This looks like it might be one of 'em," Gregg remarked.

"Reckon it is," Becknell said.

"What do we want of a ford?" Trapper Jim asked wonderingly.

Instead of answering directly, the leader began to talk about the country like a schoolmarm to her class. The *atajo*, he said, had now reached the fork of the route. The straightest line to Santa Fe led across the ford into little-known bad-lands. Somewhere beyond the waterless plains there was a river which the Indians called the Bull, and the Mexicans the Cimarron. It was known mainly by hearsay. No two accounts were alike. From what could be pieced together, it appeared that the water supply was extremely unreliable. In some places the current ran aboveground; in others, underground. It varied from season to season.

As to the country in between, there was no such uncertainty. All accounts described it as difficult and dangerous. The entire distance between the Arkansas and the Cimarron was waterless and almost lifeless. But how great was that distance? There was no certain information on that vital point. Indians had successfully made the passage. So much was known. Where an Indian could go, a white man could follow. That was Captain Becknell's belief, particularly if the white man was named Becknell.

"So there it is," he said, folding the map. "Who's for the south with me?"

"And leave the river?" a voice asked dubiously.

"There's other rivers besides this one," the Captain said.

"The good old wet Arkansas is good enough for me," a grizzled mountain man asserted.

"I don't like the looks of that country," a wagoner put in, peering out across the flat and sterile expanse.

"I don't even like the smell of it," added a mule-man, sniffing at a hot blast of air from that quarter.

"Ain't that Mexico on the other side?" another member asked.

"The maps ain't what you might call particular as to that," the Captain admitted. "Some folks say one thing, some say another."

"What do the Mexicans say?" a mule man inquired.

"I reckon they claim it."

"They can have it for all of me," Pete put in. "The greasers have a saying about that country. They say that a bachelor wolf with no family dependent on him couldn't make his living there."

"But it's the shortest trail and the flattest," said Becknell. "Easy on the wagons."

Faro Mike took this up. "Trail? Who made it?"

"Nobody yet," the Captain said. "We'll make our own."

"Yeh, but where to?" a teamster asked.

"The Cimarron River. The rest'll be easy."

One of the fur-trappers said uneasily: "I've heard it was a thirsty country."

Walker said: "One rain a year is figured to be a wet season."

Ewing Young turned to him. "You've been across on the other side, haven't you, Joe?"

The camp-master nodded. "A couple of years ago."

"What did you find?"

"Not the Cimarron. But it wasn't for want of looking. I was glad to get back to Arkansaw water. It's a tough piece of map."

Captain Becknell looked soberly about the circle. "I don't claim that the trip will be an Independence Day picnic with a Liberty pole and free vittles and the silver cornet band playing 'Yankee Doodle'," he said. "I only say it's the direct route, and I'm taking it."

"Is it an order, Cap?" the gambler asked respectfully enough.

"No sir!" was the emphatic reply. "This isn't even a vote. Every man to decide for himself, and no hard feelings."

FREE discussion followed. One member said he had heard unpleasant things about the desert Indians. He liked his scalp where it was and preferred to keep it there. Another said that he wasn't afraid of the redskins, but when he wanted a drink of water, he wanted it; he'd stick to the good old Arkansas. A third pointed out that there was no hurry. Why take such a risk when there was plenty of time? A young muleteer spoke up.

"I bet I know what the Captain's after. That gold and jewels and stuff in the Lost Cities. You on that Cibola trail, Cap? If you are, I'm with you."

The leader grinned. "Well, I reckon Cibola is just as likely to be out there as anywhere."

Harmon Gregg looked hard at his chief. "You're sure you're set on going, Bill?"

"Sure as I am that Job had boils," Becknell said.

"All right. I'm with you."

"Count me in," Walker said.

"And me." "And me." "And me." The response came from Young, Trapper Jim, and the Ohioan. William Wolfskill said he had never seen a real desert: here was his chance.

Captain Becknell knew the habits of animals, Indians and frontiersmen. He was shrewd, brave, hardy and honest. Men respected him.

They waited silently.

"To get back to the Arkansas."

"We'll never make it," Walker croaked.

"Maybe not. But it's the only chance," the leader repeated.

"We can kill the mules," someone muttered.

"And go on foot? Might as well cut our own throats," Gregg said.

"I'll shoot the man that lays a hand on a mule of mine," Trapper Jim said savagely.

"How long can the mules last?" Walker asked.

Illustrated by
CLEVELAND
WOODWARD

Three of the muleteers followed. That would be enough for two wagons. Becknell was satisfied. Ewing Young said:

"We'll sweat a heap out there. What about waterscrape?" This was the frontier term for water supply carried by the pack animals or in the wagons.

"We've got plenty of *ollas*," the leader replied, pointing to a row of small, earthenware jars.

Young looked them over doubtfully. "Say, Cap, how far you reckon this Cimarron water is?"

"Forty miles. Maybe forty-five."

"I'd figure on sixty," Walker advised.

"We'll travel by night and lay up by day," the leader said. "That'll be easier on the livestock. We ought to make twenty miles between sundown and sunup. There's plenty of water in the Cimarron when we get there, I reckon."

"God help us if there isn't," Harmon Gregg said soberly.

They did not get there.

Chapter Fifteen

A JACK-RABBIT reared up on his furry haunches and stared across the flat and sterile plain. He was surprised. He had lived in that country a long time, but he had never seen anything like the cavalcade winding in and out among the spiky greasewood bushes. They were not buffalo and they were not antelope, and they certainly were not bear or deer. It was Jack's first sight of human beings and their mode of travel. Hence he had no means of identifying the astonishing apparition as a wagon train. These strange creatures might be unfriendly to jack-rabbits, he decided. He lowered himself cautiously to his forepaws and went about his business in a series of long bounds which could outdistance anything slower than an arrow.

The rabbit's suspicions were well founded. The men in and around those two wagons would gladly have killed him. They would have killed any living creature with blood in its veins. For this was Captain Becknell's split-off group. They had been out for two nights and three days, and they were hopelessly lost. Their last drop of water had been finished that noon. Baked out by the withering heat, they had killed their two dogs and divided the blood. It kept them alive but did little to quench their thirst.

How had they lost their way? Nobody could tell. Their azimuth compass was a poor thing. But there were the stars to steer by at night, and the cruel sun by day. Something had gone wrong in their reckoning. They had come upon the banks of what once was a creek. The bottom was dry sand. It may have been Sand River. It was not the sought-for Cimarron. Becknell cut greasewood branches and set them up. In the midst of his bitter suffering, he had still the resolution to leave landmarks for others who might come that way.

At the close of the third day, he gathered the handful of his followers.

"We've got just one chance," he told them.

The men looked at one another haggardly. Twenty-four hours earlier a quart of water, sorely needed by the men, had been given to each animal. They could still plod. But two of them looked sick.

Captain Becknell gave the orders. They were to spread out, on the chance of finding a *tinaja* (a natural tank) of rainwater. It was a chance in a thousand, but they must take every chance. If water was found, the signal would be three gunshots. In that lifeless stillness, a shot could be heard for many miles. Every man was to head due north. When he could walk no longer, he was to crawl into the wagon, and his place would be taken by another.

IT was a night of torture. The next day was worse. The agonized men saw shimmering lakes of blue before them, which vanished as they advanced. This was not delirium. It was the cruel mirage of the desert. Young Ohio Slim came staggering back to the wagon at noon, babbling that he had seen one of the Lost Cities, glittering with gold and silver. And here were the jewels they had heard of! He emptied his pockets of the sand he had scrabbled up. Pouring its rays down from above, the sun had addled his brain.

The men knew that they could not last through another day, probably not through that night. Their tongues were turning black. Death is but a few hours away when this occurs. They slit the ears of the patient mules to get a little blood.

At sunset Trapper Jim dropped. He lay in the sand, waiting to die. The indomitable Becknell unhitched the freshest mule from the wagon,

mounted it and rode on. He had no hope, no expectation of finding anything. But it was not in him to give up. The spirit of the pioneer drove him on.

A dark form appeared on the skyline, moving in his direction. He wheeled his mule and dug his spurless heels into its flanks. Throwing himself from its back, he seized his gun and loaded it. Then he loaded Jim's weapon. Two guns were better than one. But could he rouse his companion? Was the trapper still alive?

He pushed the sprawled body to a sitting posture and shook it violently. Through his parched lips he forced one word in a dry croak.

"Buffalo!"

Trapper Jim staggered to his feet. A buffalo! If they could kill it, that might mean life for them. He staggered to his feet and brought his rifle to his shoulder. He could not speak; his tongue was too swollen. But he sighted along the smooth barrel, and nodded.

The great animal came lumbering on. It was an old bull, weak and half blind. Its belly sagged. Scenting the mules, it stopped. Becknell fired. The bull half turned and limped away. Trapper Jim's more careful shot brought it to its knees. It fell and rolled. The hunters, with knives drawn, rushed upon it.

They were in luck. The distended belly was heavy with undigested water, gallons of it. They drank and drank till they could swallow no more, then took a pailful of the filthy but precious liquid to the wagon where Gregg lay, semi-conscious. He revived at once. They held a hasty council over the dead body of the buffalo bull.

WHEREVER the bull had found the water, it could not be far off. Could they pick up his trail and follow it? Darkness was coming on. They set themselves to study the ground. The hoofprints led them to the northeast. From a ridge they made out a clump of trees, taller than any desert-growth. The search was over. Not waiting to reach the waterhole which they knew to be there, they fired the triple signal.

No answer was heard. By this they knew that their companions were either too far distant to hear or too far gone to answer. After refreshing themselves and their animals, they filled up the containers with the clear water and scattered. One wagon they found still doggedly headed north, the men only half conscious. They were revived and helped to trace down the remaining mule riders. There was a joyous gathering that night at the waterhole. The animals were no less thankful than the men.

An easy morning jog brought them back to the Arkansas. All were well content to follow it and the old route, except Captain Becknell. He had left his marks behind him. He still believed in the short Cimarron route.

Some day it would be found.

Chapter Sixteen

MEN dying of hunger require long days to restore their strength. Men who are near death from thirst return to normal more quickly. Capt. Becknell's group were tough of fiber. Two days of rest set them on their feet. Their weary animals were equally glad of the lay-off.

The third morning dawned in a dash of rain. Captain Becknell rose from his blankets, stretched, and said with a mighty yawn;

"This isn't getting us any nearer Santa Fe."

The *atajo* came to life under the spur of the starting routine.

"Ready?" from the trail-master.

"All ready."

"Catch up."

The familiar contest was in motion. Soon the triumphant call of the spryest sounded:

"All set!"

"Fall in." The line formed. Then, "Stretch out!" and once more they were on the move westward.

The small *atajo* now traveled with an advantage which they had not enjoyed before. They had a plain trail to follow, the track of the wagon wheels of those who had chosen the easier route. They had no need to scout ahead for possible obstacles. The men in front had done that for them.

The course was a steady, moderate climb toward the high mountains, through grassy uplands with frequent patches of woods. Tributary streams, mostly dry, cut across their path here and there and slowed down their progress. Often the banks were small, loose-soiled precipices. In the worst places they had to unload the wagons at the bottom and haul them up with ropes. The mules were then called upon to pack the merchandise to the summit for re-loading. Even this device was not always enough. The humans must turn themselves into pack animals, toiling under heavy and repeated burdens, up the treacherous cliffsides.

At Little Rabbit Creek Trapper Jim's rear axle gave out, and the entire outfit was held up for a day while he searched for, found and trimmed a hardwood branch suitable to the strain. Further along a horse got into a patch of loco weed and filled up on the "crazy plant" before he was discovered. His actions stampeded the other animals. Four hours were wasted in rounding them up.

Delays annoyed Captain Becknell. He kept hoping to catch up with the forward section. At one time, so he judged by the marks, the main body was barely a day's journey ahead.

Then without apparent reason, the trail disappeared at a low spot where a stretch of gravel interrupted the broad green level of the prairie. Not even Trapper Jim's keen eyes could find wheel marks.

"Last night's rain washed 'em out," Harmon Gregg asserted.

"Then we'll pick 'em up in the grass opposite," the leader said.

They fanned out across the space, looking for a break in the tall upland growth. There was no sign of it.

"Musta climbed a cloud and sailed away," Pete surmised.

THE men were puzzled. Wagon trains do not vanish into thin air, leaving no trace. To be sure, the caravan ahead might have turned into the river. But why? When the two bands had parted company, Faro Mike's lot had shown a marked distaste for the southern bank and its arid desert. What could have happened to change their minds?

Captain Becknell climbed a nearby rise for a better view. He shouted and pointed upstream where a patch of trees had shut off the view from below.

"Chouteau's Island," he called.

He came back and explained. Unless he was mistaken, this was the river stronghold which Auguste Chouteau and his fifty followers had successfully defended against three hundred Pawnees, killing thirty of them as they attempted the ford. The breastwork of felled cottonwoods should still be visible. For all that Captain Becknell knew, some of Chouteau's men were still in occupation.

He cupped his hands and hailed. Figures ran out from the shelter of the thickets and waved the men to come over. They were Becknell's own band. The Captain rode his mule across and demanded an explanation. Faro Mike gave it, not without embarrassment.

After the party split, he had been chosen leader. They got along all right for the first week. Then the men became careless. One night in the dark of the moon a small band of Indians had crept past a sleeping sentry, stampeded the carelessly hobbled livestock, and run off twelve head. Mike was through. He wanted nothing better than to hand over the command to the original leader.

The others felt the same way. They all wanted Captain Becknell back. So

the divided band became a solid unit again.

As they were preparing to leave, the representative of the Chouteau interests gave Captain Becknell some parting advice. A band of Pawnees was somewhere in the vicinity. They might want to trade. Or they might want to raid.

"You never can tell about Pawnees," he said.

At any rate, the caravan would be wise to stick close together and make the best speed they could out of the country. The wisest plan would be for them to keep close to the river.

"We won't get much fur that way," the Captain commented. "What about the back-country?"

The other was not encouraging. He had been kindly and hospitable to the wayfarers under his roof, as was the rule of the wilderness, but it was plain that he was going to tell them nothing. It popped into the Captain's mind that, to this man, they were poachers. He did not want them in his country.

One of the island men in the background, who had been listening to his chief's evasive answers, chuckled and said to Becknell;

"Demandez a Monsieur 'Atch." (Ask Mr. Hatch.)

"Who's Hatch?" Becknell asked curiously.

"Some folks don't believe there's any such person," the head man replied.

Wolfskill, who understood French, heard the man who had first spoken remark that there were some things it wasn't lucky to talk about.

Farewells were exchanged. The reunited *atajo* forded the river and turned upstream.

Chapter Seventeen

PHYSICALLY the expedition returned to the route in prime condition. From a business viewpoint they had not done so well. Some of their stock of goods had been wasted through carelessness in the early days before they had come under the discipline of the trail. One whole pack was lost with the horse which was swept away in the Little Arkansas.

Other merchandise had been expended in the "swaps" with the thievish Osages. The stock must be replaced. It would not do to go into Santa Fe short of trade-goods.

The answer was fur. This was always a marketable article.

But where were the fur animals? Not along the Arkansas river bottom certainly. Chouteau's men had cleaned out that once prolific trapping ground.

The mountain men were for scattering in small groups through the back country. Captain Becknell vetoed that plan. With warlike savages ranging the region, they must hang together for protection. He was willing to give them a reasonable time to trap, but safety was the first consideration.

Every night around the campfires, the members talked fur. They were in high country now and still climbing. The hides ought to be in first-rate condition if they could find them. But where were the untrapped streams?

They were breaking camp early one morning in a high mountain meadow overlooking the river, when a distant shot startled them. It rolled and echoed and reverberated from cliff to cliff.

INSTANTLY the mechanism of defense which Captain Becknell had perfected went into motion. The grazing animals were herded swiftly within the hollow square of the wagons. Underneath, the men were coolly loading and priming their long rifles, each holding a spare bullet between his teeth.

"Listen for the whistle," somebody called.

Pawnees, while hunting or making war, were in the habit of using signal whistles of willow, or if they could get them in trade, of metal.

Silence followed the shot.

William Wolfskill walked over to where Becknell was consulting with his lieutenants.

"That was no Indian," he said.

"How do you know?" Ewing Young asked sharply.

"It was a full charge of powder."

"That's right," Joseph Walker confirmed. "You can tell by the report."

"What if it was a full charge?" the Captain asked. The Kentuckian had gained a reputation for knowing about firearms.

"Back where I come from," Wolfskill explained, "no Indian uses more than half a charge. They hoard their powder. I reckon they're all alike."

"I guess that's right, too," Becknell agreed. "We'll wait and take a look."

They advanced to the brow of the cliff and got down behind a fringe of chapparal. Presently there appeared at the upper end of the defile two mules and a man. All of them were shaggy, grimy and trail-worn. One mule carried a thin pack. The other carried the man and a fresh-killed fawn.

Captain Becknell rose to his feet. "Howdy!" he hailed.

The two mules pulled up and waggled their ears in surprise. The rider's hand twitched on his rifle, but was at once raised in salute.

"Howdy," he responded.

"Where's your outfit?"

The stranger waved a hand to indicate the two mules. "Right here," he answered.

The other Becknell men had now risen beside their leader. "Is that all there is of you?" Harmon Gregg asked suspiciously.

"That's all," the other answered gravely.

The men of the *atajo* stared at one another. They had all heard tales of lone rangers who lived and throve in the unknown back country, but they took little stock in such stories.

Becknell had a thought: "You wouldn't be Hatch, would you?"

The stranger looked pleased. "That's me," he said. "Hatch."

A voice back of the brush shouted: "Grub in five minutes."

"Come and join us," Becknell invited.

"I'll do that, and thank-ye," Hatch answered.

There was some delay before he appeared. When he walked into the breakfast circle he had changed his costume. He now had on a buckskin coat as stiff as a board fence. It went on over his head like a barrel. He never sat down in the open, or went to sleep, he explained, without puting it on. Soaked thoroughly in water and sun-hardened, the hide would turn the point of a war-arrow.

"There's Indians around, then," the trail-master said quickly.

"Not now," Hatch answered.

"Baptiste back at Chouteau's Island warned us about a band of Pawnees."

A small smile appeared in the depths of Hatch's whiskers. "That's to scare you off," he said.

"Why would he want to scare us?"

"The fewer trappers, the more game."

OVER *madre* Pete's piping hot meal, they questioned him about the prospects of trapping. Unlike the island dwellers, he was liberal with his information, such as it was.

Anywhere along the small streams over the ranges, he told them, there was plenty of fur. Beaver? Why, those mountain beaver grew half as big as a sheep. Otter? He'd seen otter that could lick a mountain-cat in a stand-up fight. Foxes and muskrat and such-like, they were so thick you could catch 'em under your hat like butterflies.

"I wonder if he knows what he's talking about," Trapper Jim said a little too audibly. The guest overheard it.

"I'd ought to," he said mildly. "I been here and hereabouts going onto five year."

"Alone?" Gregg exclaimed. "And you kept your scalp?"

The mules waggled their ears in surprise. The rider's hand twitched on his rifle, but was at once raised in salute. "Howdy," he responded.

"Oh, Indians ain't so bad if you know how to meet 'em," Hatch said with his quiet smile.

"How do you go about it if you meet up with a band?" Walker asked curiously.

"I say: 'Howdy? Trade?' And we trade."

"Just as simple as that!" Ewing Young commented. He had the answer—or thought he had. "Indians won't harm a crazy man," he explained to his companions. "They most likely think he's exalted in the head—crazy."

"Maybe I am," said Hatch. "But I get along all right."

Borrowing a pencil and a bit of paper, he drew them an offhand map of the country and bade them goodby. They never saw him again.

"There," Pete said as he disappeared down the slope, "goes the prize liar since Ananias."

That was the general opinion. But there was the map. It was worth trying. They scattered to investigate the indicated streams, without too much faith in the result.

They were never more mistaken in their lives. The informative Mr. Hatch might have exaggerated a little, but he knew his business. Setting and resetting the traps kept the whole company busy. Jim and the mountain man with whom he was teaming took thirty beaver from one pool. The largest of the catch shaded one hundred pounds, and several went over sixty.

The *atajo* spent ten days along the streams, and took out more than three thousand dollars' worth of furs. These were scraped, cured and packaged. The valuable pelt, beaver or otter, was carefully folded, the hairy side within. When enough layers had been set, green buckskin thongs were cinched around the bundle. Drying out, these bands contracted with the power of a vise. The pelts were compressed to iron hardness without damage to the fur. A standard pack was eighty beaver or sixty otter skins. Small-fry operators would pack as many as six hundred muskrat pelts in a single bundle.

Every wagon was overloaded as the *atajo* left the Arkansas and struck south into Mexico. Every pack animal was groaning and protesting against the extra weight on its back. All the men were happy.

The perils of the adventurous journey were now behind them. The southward trail was semi-civilized. Villages were frequent, but the travelers were not favorably impressed with their character: the Indian inhabitants, while peaceful, were a poor and scrawny lot compared to the vigorous and hardy Pawnees, Kiowas, and Osages of the earlier days. As for the Mexicans, their chief occupation appeared to be slumber. It was difficult to rouse them to the point of showing any interest in trade. All that they had to offer was a little coarse food.

The Becknell outfit, however, was not complaining. The going was easy and pleasant. Even Captain Becknell had relaxed his rigorousness. Santa Fe would be all right, he assured them.

And Santa Fe *was* all right, although those who had not seen it before found it hard to believe that anything profitable could come from the low-roofed, mud-hued, mean-looking settlement. They changed this opinion before they reached the central square. The city proved just as trade-greedy as the adventurers had been told.

It seemed as if all the inhabitants had turned out into the plaza to welcome them. They made their sales, both fur and trade-goods, almost before the merchandise could be unstrapped from the animals and unloaded from the "Pittsburghs."

The caravan whooped:

Hip-hip-hooray
For Santa Fe!

When the last dollar had been counted out, and the time came for return, Captain Becknell declared that he was going to have another try at the *Jornada*. To the objections of his friends he had a ready reply. The former attempt had been foolish; he admitted that. A man ought to have

more gumption than to strike out for a river like the Cimarron, when he didn't rightly know whether it was there or somewhere else.

It was different with the Arkansas. Everybody knew where that was. The good, old, reliable Arkansas. *It* didn't sink underground and leave nothing but dry, hot sand. And that took all the risk out of the reverse trip. He would start far up the Cimarron where there was a steady flow of water, and follow it down to the last moisture. Kegs would be taken along for the waterscrape.

At the last pool, the caravan would fill up and head north across the *Jornada del Muerto* (Journey of Death), as the Mexicans called it. The Arkansas ran right across the map. How could they miss it?

Several of his companions still had faith in him, in spite of the terrible experience of the desert. If Becknell wanted to go that way they wouldn't let him go alone. Ready? All set! Stretch out!

The attempt was not only successful, but easy. They reached the river without even a mule having occasion to complain of being thirsty. Thus an alternate trail was established (though some later travelers seem to have missed it, thereby getting into trouble) which cut off several days of hard travel.

Early in the first afternoon out, Becknell came upon the greasewood branches which he had cut and left as markers. He threw up his hands. In that ordeal, at the time when he and his companions were turning back in despair of ever finding the sought-for river, they were within ten short miles of the Cimarron's abundant waters.

Chapter Eighteen

CAPTAIN BECKNELL had shown that it could be done. Now the U. S. Government undertook to make it easier. Congress authorized a survey from the Missouri River to New Mexico with the purpose of laying out a trail. Waterholes were to be indicated on the map which the expedition would make as it traveled. Mounds were to be erected as landmarks. How far this excellent idea was carried out does not appear. Probably not very far. Later trailmen paid little attention to Uncle Sam's well-meant experiment.

At any rate, Captain Becknell did not wait for it. Early in 1824 he, Augustus Starrs, and a Colonel M. M. Marmaduke formed an *atajo* on the grand scale. Becknell's two partners were merchants of standing and wealth. They enlisted seventy-eight adventurers for the journey to Santa Fe. It was to be done in style. There were twenty-five wagons, one hundred and fifty horses and mules, and thirty thousand dollars' worth of merchandise. Every member was required to have a rifle, a pistol, four pounds of powder, eight pounds of lead and twenty days' provisions.

As compared to the twenty-five pounds of powder and one hundred pounds of lead of the former Becknell outfit, this seems a surprisingly light armament. It indicates that the leaders expected a quick journey. It was not so quick. They started from Franklin on May 15th and did not reach Santa Fe until July 28th. Seventy-four days for nine hundred miles travel over a trail already established is not an impressive record. What delayed them? As their twenty-day supply of food was not nearly enough, they may have spent some time hunting game. Possibly they made some side trips, searching for the Lost Cities of Cibola. There is no record of trouble with Indians. Probably the redskins were awed by the size and formation of the band. By this time they were familiar with the carrying quality of the long rifles and had a healthy respect for paleface marksmanship.

SANTA FE was still hungry for merchandise. And the Becknell-Starrs-Marmaduke wagons were heavy with all sorts of tempting goods. To the eager Mexicans they offered knives, buttons, ribbons, saws, files, nails, pepper, straw hats, vinegar, brooms, pails, "stationary" (as it was then spelled), neckcloths, tar and a wide variety of gay-hued calicoes, merinos and silks. The company came back in triumph with one hundred eighty thousand dollars in cash, and ten thousand dollars' worth of furs. Six dollars in return for one dollar invested was a satisfactory result.

It looked good to the enterprising merchants of St. Louis and other far-Western settlements. A Western trek was started which increased steadily, year by year, until it changed the history of two nations.

Meantime, the Government, as part of its trail-making scheme, undertook to pacify the Indians. The Osages had always been reasonably peaceable, though unreasonably thievish. The leaders of the two tribes, Little Osage and Great Osage, were invited to a conference at Council Grove in August, 1825. It was attended by such important figures as White Hair, Foolish Chief, Handsome Bird, Good Walker, The Owl and Chief Without Ears. A treaty was offered to them. There was feasting and exchange of gifts while they considered it. A pit was dug and filled with brush which was set afire. The chiefs and the leaders of the whites formed a circle about it. Pipes were passed from mouth to mouth. Each person drew in several puffs and blew them out again in sign of friendship. The Indians then advanced one by one and spat into the fire. This was spitting out any grudge which they might have held against the palefaces.

The treaty was signed. It provided for the survey and landmarking of a road through the Osage lands with free passage for Americans and Mexicans alike. Travelers were also guaranteed camping and hunting rights and, from the tribesmen, "such friendly aid and assistance as may be in their power." It was an advantageous arrangement for the Americans. They got pretty much everything they wanted. The Osages got five hundred dollars. Since Manhattan Island was bought for twenty-four dollars, there had not been a more one-sided deal.

Even so, the Government did not get all they expected. The negotiators thought that they were buying security with their five hundred dollars. So they were, as regards the Osages. They remained at peace with the whites. But the two tribes may have represented themselves as owning or controlling more land than they actually did. To assure the traders safe passage, treaties with other tribes would have been advisable.

The Arapahoes, the Kiowas, and the Shawnees had signed nothing. Nor had the warlike Comanches and the brave and treacherous Pawnees. They had smoked no pipe of peace. They had spat out no grudges against the encroaching whites.

Treaty or no treaty, there was trouble in store for future caravans; plenty of it. Much of it they brought upon themselves.

Chapter Nineteen

THANKS to the Becknell expedition, one danger of the trail was gone. Those who followed need no longer fear getting lost. But there were plenty of dangers left.

The hardy traders who set out west from the Missouri knew that they were risking their skins as well as their capital. Sometimes the risks outweighed the rewards.

By 1828 the main route was well traveled. But a stone's-throw from the highway, the land was still wilderness. And the back country was a desperate venture. One hundred and twenty-six mountain men are known to have entered the wild country in 1826-'27, trapping and hunting. Only sixteen are known to have come out alive.

What happened to the others? It is hardly to be supposed that all of

the one hundred and ten unaccounted for were lost. Doubtless many of them drifted into less perilous pursuits without reporting themselves. Doubtless, also, a great many died unrecorded and obscure deaths in the wild country.

Some probably froze to death in the savage blizzards. Others, injured, disabled or sick, may have been unable to get food and so starved to death. Snakes and wild animals may have accounted for others.

This region was thick with grizzly bears. There is probably no more fearless and ferocious creature in nature. A pioneer in the region reported counting two hundred and twenty of them in one day.

Grizzlies are as uncertain as they are savage. Sometimes a band of them would pay no attention to a caravan of men and animals passing by. Again, a single grizzly might take it into his head to attack an expedition single-handed; in such case there would be time but for one shot, and it had better be in a vital spot. A wounded grizzly would either kill or be killed.

Jacob Fowler, an early adventurer on the Santa Fe route, tells of one of these tragedies. The expedition of which he has left a record had stopped above the Purgatoire River (called "Picketwire" by the mountain men) in a wild grape thicket to get some of the fruit for cooking. They did not notice that a grizzly was there first. The bear seized a man named Dawson and began to claw him.

The leader of the party was Colonel Glenn, an intrepid hunter. Hearing Dawson's cries, he plunged in, jammed his rifle into the animal's ribs and pulled the trigger. The gun missed fire.

At the same moment the Colonel's dog, who was as brave as her master, flew at the bear with such fury that it loosed its grip on its victim. The badly injured man staggered away a few steps; then the infuriated bear overtook him. Again the leader's gun missed fire, and again the dog rushed in.

While the bear was chasing off the dog, both the men climbed a tree. The grizzly reached high, and while the Colonel was frantically trying to reprime his gun, the bear dragged Dawson to the ground and fastened its powerful teeth in his skull. Having got his flint and powder in order, Glenn fired a shot that killed the bear, but it was too late for the unfortunate Dawson. He died of his injuries. Many equally tragic tales have come down from the early hunters.

But the trail-men themselves held the Indians responsible for most of the disappearances. Marauding bands which would not dare attack a well-armed wagon train would regard a single trapper, or a group of two or three, as their natural prey. There would be an ambush, or a sudden night attack with odds of ten or twenty to one, and nothing more would ever be heard of the trappers. Wolves, coyotes and buzzards would take care of what was left after the savages had finished.

This was the fate of Jedediah L. Smith, one of the early pioneers. Nine years of experience, in which time he had probably explored more wild country than any other white man, did not teach him caution. In 1831 his caravan of twenty-three wagons and eighty-five men left the Arkansas River and struck south for the Cimarron as William Becknell had done nine years before. And like Becknell, these more experienced travelers misreckoned their route. One might almost believe that the arid desert lay under some spell which misled the human mind.

The Smith *atajo* ran short of water. Their animals began to drop out and die. Some of the men became delirious from thirst. In the desperate hunt for water, they scattered. Stronger than his companions, the leader outdistanced them. He reached the Cimarron River alone. The only way in which he could identify it was by the sparse growth fringing the banks. Its bed was bone-dry.

He followed the course until he found a dark-hued splotch in the sand. Moisture! Throwing himself from his horse, he scooped feverishly at the sand until a little muddy water seeped in. He gulped it and waited for more. His horse followed, whinnying piteously. He needed water as much as his master.

A feathered head protruded cautiously above the river bank. Others joined it. Looking up, Smith saw the Comanches, now swelled to a band of more than twenty. He made the signs of peace and trading.

The Indians responded by flashing mirrors and waving blankets to scare his horse. As he tried to quiet the animal, a Comanche lance pierced his back. Drawing his pistol he killed two of the assailants and wounded another before they swarmed over him. His companions of the wagon train found his scalped remains beside a shallow basin filled with water.

Another famous leader, Miguel Robidoux of St. Louis, narrowly escaped the same fate. At the head of a fur-seeking band, he trapped the waters of the Gila River and penetrated into the country of the Papagos. With him was James Ohio Pattie, a wiser if not a more experienced trailman.

On the invitation of the Indians, Robidoux and his company of Frenchmen from St. Louis prepared to spend a night of feasting in the native village at the junction of the Salt River. Pattie took him aside.

"Do you think it's safe?" he said warningly.

"The Papagos are friendly," the Frenchman told him. "Their chiefs smoked the pipe last year."

An English-speaking companion of Pattie's, whose name does not appear, joined in the protest. Robidoux laughed it off. His men had been through hard days on the trail; let them have a good time for once.

"Not for us," Pattie said. "We'll camp outside."

The two found a safe place in a dry arroyo that cut back into the hills.

In the morning Robidoux staggered into camp. He was covered with blood and delirious from thirst and fever. He told a dreadful story. At midnight, the savages had risen and slaughtered the whites. He had been clubbed in the head, but managed to get away in the darkness. So far as he knew, he was the only one to escape. This proved to be true.

"We've got to get out of here," Pattie said.

His companion agreed. "They'll be after us, certes." He jerked his head toward Robidoux. "What about him? He can't travel."

"We can't leave him," Pattie said.

They decided to keep quiet that day, then lash the wounded man in a saddle and strike out after dark. By sunset the injured man had partly recovered. They set out.

Coming around the shoulder of a mountain, they saw three pin-points of fire ahead.

"They've got us cut off," Pattie said.

Leaving Robidoux in charge of the horses, he and his companion, rifles in hand, went forward to reconnoiter. By the firelight they could make out a number of horses, but only two human figures. They seemed to be asleep.

It had been Pattie's idea to spy out a way to pass the band. Now he had another notion. When the sleepers got up and passed before the fire, they would offer an excellent mark. Why not shoot them and stampede the horses? This ambitious purpose the two whites discussed and agreed upon in whispers. At fifty yards range they could hardly miss. At forty or thirty-five, it would be even surer. The pair edged forward.

One of the supposed sleepers got to his feet and addressed his companion. He spoke in English! The surprise and relief brought Pattie automatically to his feet. Instantly

the two men below grabbed their guns and leveled them.

"Don't shoot!" Pattie shouted. "Friends! Friends!"

The nearby camp was roused. They were a hunting party headed by Ewing Young. There were thirty-three of them, a force sufficient to tackle the savages. They descended upon the village and burned it, after killing such warriors as were unable to get away.

As in this case, the vengeance of the whites was often in the same spirit of savagery as that of the redskins. Burning Indian villages and shooting down the fleeing squaws and papooses was not uncommon. After a victory over the Apaches, one of the expeditions killed the wounded and beheaded all the corpses. In the words of an early chronicler, they were "too much exasperated to show mercy."

Nor did the Indians enjoy a monopoly of scalping. This playful practice was common among the early trailsmen. It is doubtful even that they were imitating the savages. They may have inherited the trick from back East. In 1791, for instance, leading citizens of Pittsburgh combined to offer one hundred dollars in lawful currency for every Indian scalp. There was a proviso, however, that the scalp must have both ears attached to command the full price. What special value there is to a dead Indian's ears does not appear.

Nor always were the redmen the aggressors. Two explorers in 1828 were surprised and killed by Comanches. Their bodies were carried to the Arkansas River for burial by the caravan which found them. While the service was in progress, a small and peaceful band of Indians appeared. They were not even the same tribe as the killers of the explorers McTeer and Monroe. There is no reason to suppose that they knew of the murders.

Sensing a hostile attitude on the part of the much larger force of whites, they wheeled their horses and tried to escape. The whites ran them down and killed all but one, who escaped to tell the grisly tale. Is it any wonder that the Indians considered the whites treacherous and murderous—as the white considered the Indians?

Nine-tenths of the senseless slaughter was probably avoidable. Consider the case of the Bent brothers and that great pioneer, Ceran St. Vrain. They built forts and trading posts and did business with the most ferocious of the tribes. The Arapahoes, the Cheyennes, the Apaches, Comanches, and Sioux came to trust and respect them. A bargain entered into by them was faithfully carried out. Knowing that whisky influenced an Indian to raiding and murder, they refused to carry the dangerous firewater in trade. At a time when savage raids and equally brutal reprisals were common on prairie, desert, and mountain range, the Bents and their partners kept an honorable peace with the tribes.

Most humans, white, red, or black, will play fair with their fair-dealing fellowmen.

Chapter Twenty

THE end of the trail did not necessarily mean the travelers' problems were all over. They may have thought that they had encountered all possible kinds of trouble while in the wilds. But they were wrong. The Mexicans had some new varieties awaiting them.

At first the Mexicans were eager for the trade goods from the north. Nothing was too good for the American wagonmen. No price was too high to pay.

High-grade cloth sold for twenty dollars a yard. Cotton goods, bought for a few cents a yard, brought as many dollars in the Mexican market place. Nails went for five cents apiece. Tobacco brought three dollars a pound. One hundred percent profit on an investment was regarded as poor business. Sometimes it rose as high as a thousand percent.

New Mexico elected a governor, Don Manuel Armijo. He did not like *Americanos*. But he was very fond of money. The *Americanos* had money, plenty of it. If they wanted to trade in Santa Fe, it was proper that they should pay for it. He slapped a tax of five hundred dollars per wagon on traffic from the north. It was a flat tax; a small, two-mule wagon paid as much as the largest prairie schooner.

Soon the small vehicles vanished from the trail. The large ones grew larger. Governor Armijo then levied duties on the goods, as high as one hundred percent or more. Eight-cent cotton paid fifteen cents a yard; other items were increased proportionately.

The Armijo policy did not kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. It merely raised the price of the eggs.

"If the greasers can boost taxes, we can boost prices," said the traders, and they did.

The Mexican people paid the fancy prices. Governor Armijo got rich, which was the purpose of the taxes all along.

He still did not like the Americans. An edict of 1824 forbade foreigners to hunt or trap in Mexican territory. The trappers knew the answer to that, too. Some of them applied for Mexican citizenship.

Armijo took to throwing Americans into jail and confiscating their merchandise. Doubtless he had some excuse. The country was filling up with poachers. James M. Baird, who had been thrown into prison by the Spaniards in 1812, protested these raids to the United States Government. He declared that the Americans and English were taking one hundred thousand dollars' worth of furs, mostly beaver, out of Mexican territory every year. Baird was one of those who had renounced his citizenship and become a Mexican. He wanted his share of beaver skins, and he claimed that the interlopers were killing off the valuable animals. Doubtless he was right. There were few conservationists among the pioneers.

Though within his legal rights, Governor Armijo was neither tactful nor honest. He arrested Ewing Young and confiscated twenty thousand dollars in furs. Some of them belonged to Milton Sublette, an independent-minded member of Young's band. When the skins, now legally in the possession of the Mexican authorities were put out to air, Sublette quietly picked up his lot, shouldered the burden, and walked away.

The governor called out the municipal guard to arrest Sublette. The other trappers lined up with their rifles and issued an over-our-dead-bodies challenge. There were fully a hundred armed Americans in Santa Fe, none of whom liked Armijo any better than he liked them. The chances of international trouble were plain. Young solved the immediate difficulty by giving himself up to the authorities.

He was jailed for violating the edict of 1824. An unexpected difficulty arose. Nowhere could a copy of the edict be found. It had vanished. Ewing was unjailed, but never got his furs back. Just to show that he had no hard feelings, he applied for Mexican citizenship the next year. More intrepid, or perhaps more patriotic, Sublette hung onto both his American citizenship and his beaver skins.

A LATER expedition with two thousand beaver skins taken in Mexican territory shrewdly hid them in an abandoned mine. There the furs remained until the mountain men had made the arrangements for bribing the governor and the customs officials. That was one way to do business with Mexico.

It bred bad feeling between the two nations and undoubtedly did much to bring on the Mexican War.

Meantime, the Santa Fe Trail was becoming almost crowded. Both

Santa Fe trails, indeed, for many expeditions now cut across the Cimarron Desert where the Becknell and afterward the Jedediah Smith expedition so nearly came to grief.

The Santa Fe Trail became as much of a craze as the Lost Cities of Cibola had been, and on a larger scale and with better reason. Companies were raised in the East to go after the easy money that was supposed to be there. Gullible tenderfeet sold their farms or quit their business or profession to sink their capital in the overland wagon trains. Between 1828 and 1836 one hundred seventy passports were issued to profit-dazzled adventurers. Nobody knows how many other ventures crossed the boundary illegally without permit or passport.

THE wagons grew larger and larger. The trains grew longer and longer. Oxen were introduced to the trail. They were slow, and they had tender hoofs. The drivers learned how to make buffalo-hide moccasins for them. Thus protected, they plodded along at two miles per hour, pulling more weight than the stoutest mule could haul. Commercially, they did not work out as well as either horses or mules. The market price was low. An ox could be bought at trail's end for ten dollars.

Risks of the trail persisted. The Indians did less raiding, but just as much thieving. Also they became sharper at a bargain. Epidemics beset the medically unprotected wagon trains—smallpox and cholera.

Competition brought prices down. Many of the best beaver and otter rivers had been devastated by the predatory mountain men. The newcomers had to fall back on fox and muskrat, by no means so profitable. The days of one thousand percent return in the Santa Fe market were gone forever.

The Santa Fe Trail was strewn with the bones of animals and the lost fortunes of men.

The trail becomes a road. The road becomes a highway. The highway opens new regions to traffic. Traffic increases beyond the capacity of the mules that packed it and the wagons that carried it. Railroads are built. The original trail is abandoned, wiped out, forgotten.

So it was with the Santa Fe Trail. It more than fulfilled its purpose. For, out of that original intent, grew a vast expansion of this nation; something that would never have entered Captain William Becknell's restless mind. His ambition was to roll his wagons to Santa Fe. He did it and the boundaries of his country rolled after him. His success was a major factor in the history of American expansion.

Captain Becknell died in his bed in 1832. By that time there were probably twenty-five thousand Americans in the Mexican Southwest. Many had come in by his trail. Alarmed by the invasion, the Mexican authorities forbade immigration. They suspected that the Americans would prove to be trouble-makers. They were right. In 1836 Texas raised the Lone Star flag and declared its independence.

The rambunctious Texans were not satisfied with being free from Mexico. They wanted to pass the blessings of independence on to their neighbors. They organized an invasion in 1841 and marched into New Mexico. The theory seems to have been that three hundred Texans could lick any number of Mexicans. They issued a pronunciamento:

"Throw off your shackles: come in with us."

The Mexicans did not accept the invitation. They captured the little force and threw them in jail, as they had every right to do. There was a great whoopla in the United States over the "wrongs" suffered by the invaders. It contributed to the bad feeling which brought on the Mexican War in 1846.

Seldom, if ever, is any nation one hundred percent right in its dispute with another nation. Rights and wrongs are so evenly balanced in the 1846 issue that a reasonable estimate would be fifty-fifty. The important factor, which leads straight back to the Becknell wagons, is that the trade-hungry "Yanquis" wanted more trade. Mexican opposition hampered the trade. Therefore, let's take the trade anyway, and the land with it, said the Americans.

The United States declared war. Santa Fe was captured without a fight on August 18th, 1846, and the victorious General Kearney marched on to the Pacific and raised the Stars and Stripes over California.

Year after year Becknell's wagon-tracks were broadened until they became a two-hundred-fifty-foot-wide road. Stagecoach lines were established. They charged two hundred fifty dollars per passenger from the Missouri River to Santa Fe.

Half a million dollars of traffic yearly rolled over the route. But the growing commercial importance of California tended to divert traffic from Santa Fe. The city which had once been the glowing dream of the pioneers was almost forgotten in the gold fever of 1849.

IT was still a potent name. The little railroad which in 1868 thrust westward from Topeka seventeen miles to Carbondale, took New Mexico for its goal, and called itself the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe. Mile after mile the steel rails pushed westward to Santa Fe—and beyond it. Santa Fe was sidetracked. Today it is a dreamy city in a high and lovely country. But it is no longer the goal for anyone but sun-seeking winter tourists.

The Santa Fe Trail is wiped out. It is doubtful whether a single one of the original landmarks could be found. The once deadly *Jornada del Muerto* is threaded by highways. The wagons are gone. The buffalo are gone. The Indians are gone, except the souvenir-selling remnants at the railroad stations and along the automobile routes. The few survivors of the beaver and otter hordes have withdrawn to remote fastnesses. Their great-great-grandfathers, whose pelts brought a few dollars, would be surprised and flattered at the present market price of their fur. The pioneers are almost gone, but not quite. For in the back country there are still lone-hand prospectors and trappers. Their mules are equipped and packed in the same fashion as the animals of the old *atajo*. Their lives—men and mules—are not so different. There may even be left some of the old, rugged, restless, pioneer spirit which pushed Captain Becknell's wagons through to Santa Fe one hundred and thirty years ago.

Reservations for BLUE BOOK Now Open!

"Reservations in advance" are necessary if you want the best in travel or entertainment. Now you can reserve BLUE BOOK in advance, too—by taking advantage of this handy Subscription Blank right here!

HAND THIS COUPON AND REMITTANCE TO YOUR NEWSDEALER OR MAIL TO

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE
Dept. JW11
McCall St., Dayton 1, Ohio

☐ $2.50 for 1 yr.

☐ $4.00 for 2 yrs.

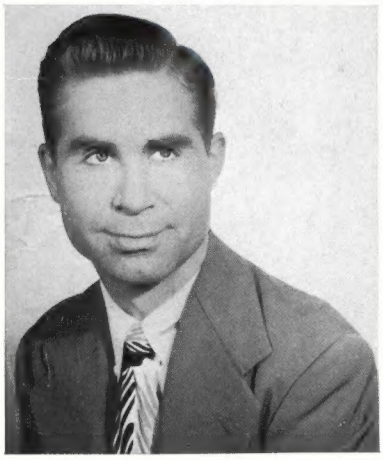
Subscriber's Name.....

Subscriber's Address.....

City & State.....

In Canada, mail to McCall Corporation, 635 Queen St E., Toronto 8, Ont.

Who's Who *in this* Issue



John T. Dunlavy

I HAVE that variegated background that seems to be the fate of many writers. I was born in Chicago, raised in Akron, educated in South Bend, married in Atlanta, and now live in New York. In all, I've lived in some ten States and twenty cities, and have to confess I like them all.

I began flying while at the University of Notre Dame, and after graduating in 1942, this led me to enlist as a Naval Air Cadet. I took my commission and wings in the Marine Corps, and compiled a bit over 1500 hours during the scrap preceding the current one. About half of these hours were spent in instructing instrument flight.

CAPTAIN EDWARD P. STAMFORD, the Marine pilot whose story of close air-support "There Are Always Miracles," begins on page 98.

I'm now a reserve Naval Flyer (Capt. USMCR).

My jobs have been as varied as their locale. At various times I've been a factory worker, laborer, truck-driver, pilot, teacher, public-relations director, sales-promotion manager, magazine editor, syndicate publisher and free-lance writer. At present I'm advertising manager for a trade magazine.

As for writing itself, in the past four years I've written soap opera and mysteries for radio, dramatic plays for television, and both fiction and non-fiction for magazines, some of them the smallest, some of them among the largest.

Chet Schwarzkopf

A NATIVE of San Francisco, I'm fifty-one years of age, and a veteran of World Wars I and II (Navy). Am a power-plant and marine engineer by vocation, and an outdoor fanatic by avocation—hence the stories.

Here in the northern Redwood Empire of California, we enjoy an out-of-doors that has few equals. Our climate is cool and invigorating the year 'round, and an abundant rainfall gives us some of the world's greatest forests and fishing streams.

For instance—as soon as the season opens here, in May, I hit into the hills to the Van Duzen river headwaters, where lurk rainbow trout of walloping size. Five-pounders are considered below par, while an occasional ten-pounder beats your gear into ruins. But it's fun! Needless to say, this territory is undoubtedly a nature writer's Promised Land.

D. C. O'Flaherty

A NATIVE of Richmond, Va., where he is at present engaged in work on a novel, D. C. O'Flaherty has been a newspaper man, a radio news executive, and a contributor to many national magazines.

He began his newspaper career in Richmond at the age of sixteen, and attended Washington and Lee University and the Brooklyn Law School of St. Lawrence University. His first newspaper assignment in New York was that of police reporter, and he has been a member of the editorial staffs of the New York *Times* and the New York Daily *News*.

D. C. O'FLAHERTY

During World War II he was a staff writer for the NBC News Department, and subsequently news editor of Station WABC (now WCBS), key station of the Columbia Broadcasting System, in charge of all New York local news programs. He has also engaged in public relations work, and until resigning recently, was Acting Information Officer of the Office of Price Stabilization for Virginia, North Carolina, West Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia.

HAMILTON GREENE, Blue Book's combat artist-correspondent at the front in Korea, talks it over with Pubinfo Officer Norman Trevesa. "Night Ambush," the author-illustrated story of a patrol to capture a prisoner, begins on page 14 of this issue. Next month will come another story, of a night-bombing flight aboard a B-26, and probably also some interesting sketches of the Kaesong conference. Several author-illustrated battle records will follow.

BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure in Fact and Fiction

November
1951

SPY-HUNT IN IRAN *by Thomas Johnson and Fletcher Pratt;* NO SAFE RETURN *by Joel Reeve;* FARMER WITH WINGS *by Peter Dollar;* THE GARNET PIN *by Edward L. McKenna;* GENERAL QUARTERS *by Jacland Marmur;* THE LAD IN THE COYOTE SKINS *by Michael Oblinger;* THE MEANEST CROOKS OF ALL *by Joseph P. Blank*

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE * November, 1951

BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure in Fact and Fiction

November

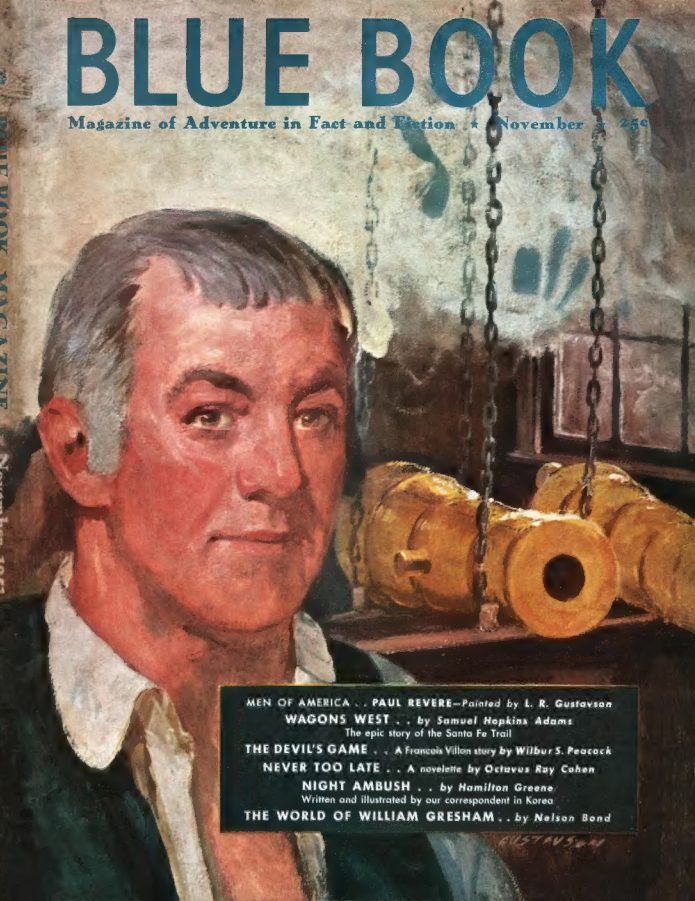
1952

SPY-HUNT IN IRAN *by Thomas Johnson and Fletcher Pratt;* NO SAFE RETURN *by Joel Reeve;* FARMER WITH WINGS *by Peter Dollar;* THE GARNET PIN *by Edward L. McKenna;* GENERAL QUARTERS *by Jacland Marmur;* THE LAD IN THE COYOTE SKINS *by Michael Oblinger;* THE MEANEST CROOKS OF ALL *by Joseph P. Blank*

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE • November, 1952

BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure in Fact and Fiction ★ November ★ 25¢



MEN OF AMERICA . . **PAUL REVERE**—*Painted by L. R. Gustavson*

WAGONS WEST . . *by Samuel Hopkins Adams*
The epic story of the Santa Fe Trail

THE DEVIL'S GAME . . A Francois Villon story *by Wilbur S. Peacock*

NEVER TOO LATE . . A novelette *by Octavus Roy Cohen*

NIGHT AMBUSH . . *by Hamilton Greene*
Written and illustrated by our correspondent in Korea

THE WORLD OF WILLIAM GRESHAM . . *by Nelson Bond*

GUSTAVSON